This is my design...

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This is my design...

by Demented_Soul

Summary

Will has been getting closer to Hannibal throughout Jack's requested visits and Hannibal decides that will needs saving even if it is against his will at first...

Hannibal invites Will to his home for dinner to give him some time to destress, but did Hannibal plan for Will to find his sketches of his own evil handy work? And how will the young agent react when he finds out he wont be leaving Hannibal's home for a while?

This story is a slow burn focusing on the aftermath of Will being kept hostage, it can be perceived as non- con Stockholm syndrome or a slow burn of the two falling in love, there are mentions of non-con drug use and a developing sexual relationship!

I hope the story is enjoyed please let me know your thoughts...

This is my design...

They say once you have mastered being alone, you are ready for the company of others, but Will wasn't, he had mastered being alone a long time ago and had every intention of keeping it that way, he was happier…it didn't make it easy though. When the only human heart beating in the house belonged to him, it wasn't something most could take, but he could. Will guesses the good news is that in time, after many unpleasant days, you are okay. Sometimes you even find joy again, or maybe it finds you? He was starting to believe that, maybe his journey could change.

Will walked out to his patio opening the door for the barrage of furry friends to do their business, these little guy's have been his only needed companions in the quiet moments, there's no judgement, no quizzical looks or forced conversation, and best of all no psychological evaluations… just the silent comfort dogs bring.

All their emotions are so similar to his own without the added human flaws so why would he need anything else? Will isn't so far gone that he doesn't know that he has a reclusive way of thinking, but he just cant find it in himself to want to change that, he has never looked at himself close enough to decide if his unique mind is a help or hinderance.

As Einstein once said, true intelligence is creativity not knowledge. Those whose conscious minds are more highly attuned to their subconscious can create new ideas and story plots as easily as dreaming, just like Will can, every devastating scene he analyses would drive most people insane, but he just sees the build-up, the act, the fear… then the escape route of the person causing so much suffering through acts of heinous torture. The fact they were always one step ahead plagued Will's mind, the flashbacks so clear his thoughts could be confused as a horror film.

The bark of a furry friend brought him back in to focus as he pushed the glasses back up the bridge of his nose and reclined on the lounger, night time was always the best time for him, Will tilted his head towards the sky, observing the constellations and the patina of the moon. At times he felt as if he could feel it vibrating somehow, it felt friendly.

That wasn't a feeling Will had when he pulled up the sheets that night, he rolled toward the darker side of the room as if the darkness could carry him away to a peaceful place. The towel beneath him was never comfortable but it was the only way to maintain some semblance of dryness through the nightmares. The blinds shut out most of the evening light, but still on the opposite wall there were rectangles of light projecting from the gaps. Will began his ritual of tossing from one side to the other, his bed that had been so carefully made became a tangle of sheets in seconds. For short spells he would close his eyes and be conscious of breathing slowly, rhythmically but then came the images, he had considered the sleeping pills Hannibal had prescribed but the last time he had taken one he was groggy the next day and his mouth had tasted of metal, it wasn't an experience he wished to repeat. The night wore on, images tumbled through his mind in rapid succession, problems Will had already solved re-emerged for another examination. After a tortured eternity the room began to get lighter and the birds chirped, Will threw back the sheets and stumbled out. Sleepless.

Time is an inscrutable thing this morning like all the rest, bleary-eyed and unmotivated by anything else but the current case, he needs to find this guy, he needs to help Abigail, he needs to prove to Jack he isn't a liability. The level of light outside tells Will that once again he certainly hasn't overslept, but once more he can't bring himself to care.

What he does care about is the dryness in his throat, the sandpapery feeling of his tongue inside his mouth and an accompanying headache. Will takes a shower before he staggers into the kitchen, pouring himself a glass of water and chugging it down.

Breakfast is probably in order regardless of the lack of appetite so busies himself searching through his meagrely stocked cupboards for something appetizing but makes his usual bowl of porridge and forces himself to eat it. Will eats on the patio distantly watching the dogs roam around while trying to ignore the sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, he doesn't want to go to work today, he doesn't Jack barging in on anymore of his lectures or tiptoeing around him, but he's a prominent academic figure in those lectures so he tosses the bowl in the sink and goes to dress.

Will's usual clothes were pulled from the closet, a red and black button-down shirt, khaki pants that almost matched his jacket, hair combed before it springs back to its usual stance of untamed curls, teeth brushed, bag thrown over his shoulder before he heads out the door. Monotonous, routine, comfort.

The lecture passes in a blur he can barely remember and Will is lucky enough to exit the building before he is accosted by Jack, sitting in Hannibal's waiting room is just as monotonous, its when the door opens Will finally feels awake for the first time in the day. Hannibal is the first 'shrink' Will has seen that he doesn't mind talking to, the man is more of a friend, there is a lack of patronising questions.

Maybe that was due to their current, sudden working relationship?

"Will, please come in." Will had grown accustom to Hannibal's office by this point, a thought he would have found disturbing only a few weeks ago. The abundance of neutral tones, the rows upon rows of lacquered wooden bookshelves above, the long couch that faces another and an armchair of the same color and material. The soft light that filters in from the windows through closed venetian blinds finished off with magnificent red and gray curtains.

Will looked around at the familiar interior and it warmed him in some way, he could never quite explain it but being around the charismatic man always felt calming, like he could finally breath and talk to someone with no judgement only help and suggestions... the irony of the man being a psychiatrist was not lost on him.

"How did you sleep? Or should I ask if you slept?" Will awkwardly pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose before throwing his bag down on the couch to slowly pace more freely. "Is it that obvious?"

"I think you are plaguing your mind trying to fix somebody who cannot be fixed."

"So now you are saying there is nothing we can do for her?"

“No Will that’s not what I’m saying, you need to understand there is no quick fix for what happened to Abigail, it will take time, I know you feel guilty Will but you did the right thing and in time Abigail will restart her life and figure out where she belongs.”

“So what has she been saying in her visits with you?”

“I cannot discuss another patient’s visit time Will you know that.”

“Thank you for feeding my dogs while I was away.”

“It was no problem, have you been taking the pills I prescribed?” Hannibal stood to pour them both a coffee before settling back in the chair, his eyes followed Will’s pacing form, he took in the way the man moved, his mannerisms as he did. Hannibal noted Will’s wardrobe never changed, comfortable and practical always, a very different style than his own.

“They cloud my thoughts.”

“In time that will stop, you will adjust and be able to organise your thoughts with more success in the presence of REM sleep… I would like for you to try them.”

“In case you have forgotten I need my thoughts for my livelihood.” Will snapped through exhaustion as he continues to pace, eyeing the intricate details off the office, when he moves to the table of drawings and runs a finger over the sketched building Hannibal shifts slightly in an unnoticeable way, maintaining his calm demeanour. “Why don’t you take a seat Will?”

“So, is this the part where I recount every moment of my childhood and you tell me that it all comes down to my deeply rooted mommy issues?” Will quips sardonically before sitting opposite the man.

“I don’t know Will, do you feel your mother’s departure so young has any impact on your current way of thinking?” Hannibal asks, looking genuinely invested in Will’s response. The agent senses no trace of judgement in the older man’s visage, and Will finds it a refreshing change.

“I have no recollection of my mother, not in any way that matters anyway, the one and only sentence I remember from her was ‘we will try socializing when your body has caught up with your brain’, I didn’t understand it then and I don’t understand it now.”

Hannibal adopted an expression of concern. “Would you like to understand it?”

Will ran a hand through his hair, tousling the mused locks. “No, I wouldn’t. I would say my social skills or lack thereof are probably due to my disillusioned mind.”

“Is that how you describe it to yourself?”

“How else would I describe it? How would anyone else describe it? That’s if they do, most tiptoe around the issue or try and convince me my way of thinking is a gift… or that I shouldn’t be ashamed.” Will stands from the couch and once again begins his methodical pacing.

“Are you ashamed?” Will didn’t answer, just shrugged and continued to pace. “If you were given the chance right now, to give away your thought processes and be far away from the spectrum would you take it?”

“You mean be like everyone else? You can give things to me straight, regardless of peoples thoughts I don’t need to be wrapped in cotton wool.”

“No one is quite like anyone else.” Hannibal retorted.

“Oh, come on. Is this the ‘everyone is special’ shtick? I’ve heard enough of that for a lifetime.”

“But Will, everyone is special, everyone unique, that’s just biology.”

Will wrinkled his nose. “Just the same as not everyone believes that then I guess.”

“It’s nature versus nurture, environment verses circumstance. You’re familiar with those concepts Will?”

“Of course, I’m supposedly in the latter of each.”

“Have you ever looked into them in more detail?”

“No, I think I know them well enough.”

“Why don’t you come over for dinner this evening? I have a book covering a variety of views regarding these concepts, it may also give you a chance to get out of your own mind for a while?” Will nodded as he threw his bag back over his shoulder, he’s unsure why he even accepted the invitation, maybe to be polite? “Ok seven would be perfect if that works for you?” Another nod as Will left the office for home.

Will completed his ritual of walking and feeding the dogs before he sat at the table preparing to attach the last feather of the fishing lure that he had removed fifty times because it wasn’t perfect like the rest were, when he sees the feather perfectly attached, he pulls the magnifying glass over it for a closer look. The wire was wrapped perfectly, the feathers angled in line with the rest at the perfect height… he questions if he did it before he left for the couple of days although he knows he didn’t. Will momentarily considers pulling out his gun to do a sweep of his own home but guesses he knows who attached it, the thought reminded him of his evening plans ahead with Hannibal that is now only a short time away so goes to change to a near identical set of clothes.

All the reasons not to get out of the car come flooding in when Will pulls up to Hannibal’s home, he feels the soft panic grow and fade depending on which option he takes next. It will fade if he backs away, rise if he doesn’t, but he forces himself from the car anyway. Will paused at the doorway, letting his eyes roam the room building giving his mind had a few moments longer to prepare.

Knocking on the door takes a decent amount internal force, but he does, Hannibal answers within seconds, probably hearing the tyres against the gravel Will concedes. “Will welcome,

punctual as always, you must be hungry… please come in."

Will walked inside and the house was just as welcoming from the open door to the wide hallway. Upon the walls were the hand sketched drawings of buildings constructed with such passion they were obviously loved. The floor was an old-fashioned oak with a hint of red and a blend of deep homely browns, the walls were an array of textures but the same neutral shades of the man's office.

"Let me take your jacket." Will shrugs off his jacket and hands it to Hannibal who catches a scent of the younger man's aftershave. "You took my advice and switched your aftershave." Will nodded and Hannibal smiles internally at the fact he is doing his job and Will is listening. He ushered the younger man into a chair at the divinely set out wooden table before setting down a wine glass in front of Will.

"Good to see you took me up on my offer and you are taking the time to relax." Hannibal smiles but right now, Will is wound tighter than he has been in weeks, there is an atmosphere he can't quite put his finger on.

Hannibal fills the wine glass placed in front of Will and watches as the youngers eyes examines the flow of liquid, Will's fascinated interest in the everyday meagre things that most don't notice intrigued the Doctor, the agent had an interesting mind, one he had never encountered before.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome, please get comfortable dinner won't be long." With that Hannibal moved to the kitchen to finish off the appetizers. He looked down at the two meats, his own and the actual pork for Will, it wasn't that he had reservations about serving the pure meat to people, Jack like many others had enjoyed it… but when Will knows the truth, Hannibal knows he couldn't cope with the fact that he had eaten human flesh, physically or emotionally. Hannibal knew not to be greedy, take too many and get careless so much that the FBI would come knocking. Just the pure ones that deserve honouring. The grand design was so much more than that though, people will see.

The food Hannibal put so much effort in to smelled heavenly to Will, just like the breakfast the man had made him once before, the thought showed a spike in appetite, one he hadn't felt for a while. Will lightly drummed his fingers on the table while waiting, he took note of the smells, and the scenery around him. There was an array of colorful flowers in the centre piece on the table with two red candles that seemed to be entwined within the stems, it was a rather elegant setting, one Will should have anticipated having a feel for the charismatic man by now.

Hannibal brings out the first course placing it in front of Will before taking his own seat opposite the younger on the exceptionally long table. "Please, enjoy." Will looked around, trying to assess if there is an etiquette he is not displaying in such a grand environment, when he picks up the fork, he notices his hand shaking, he can't be that nervous surely? He's been in worse situations, literal life-threatening situations… and this is just dinner.

"You seem anxious Will."

“No more than usual.”

"You hide behind your words. You want your words to mask the real you. I see you feel compelled to hide behind a false identity. What are you afraid of?"

"You want a true identity? What is that? I am many people in one body. I have carefully moulded each of them. In these identities, I play a part that people expect. I am whoever they need me to be in that moment."

"Do you hide yourself from everyone? What are you hiding now?”

"When I sit in your office, I know that you want to help me. You hope to journey to the real me. Yet, I don't know if that’s possible… because maybe this is all I am."

"And maybe it isn’t? My job is to walk beside you and help you find this real self.”

"I thought your job was to clear me of any underlying, undiagnosed psychosis to soothe Jacks concerns?”

“Will I do not think you have any underlying psychosis, nobody does, but you do have things you need to work through.”

“With you?” Will tried to hide the aggravation in his voice at Hannibal’s shrinking tone, but he was surprised with the man’s answer.

“If you like, if not I can recommend many other reputable people.”

“I would still see you often throughout the duration of this case.”

“I’m sure, but I would like to think we have a comfortable working and personal relationship.” Will internally starts when he realises he hopes that too, but more so when he realises he doesn’t want to see another psychiatrist.

Will simply nods, “Just let me know if that’s what you decide, there would be no ill feeling.” Hannibal once again takes away the dishes before he brings out the final course of dessert, cheese and crackers, sweet jams and sharp chutneys as well as a bottle of brandy, it looks expensive, golden and smokey. The smell is sweet, something to savour. Hannibal doesn’t skimp on the amount either, pouring Will a full half of a glass.

When they were done eating dessert, Hannibal quickly took care of the dishes against Will’s many offers of help, instead he was told to remain seated. Hannibal returns a few moments later just as Will puts down his empty brandy glass and shakes his head when things start to spin slightly. “I-I should probably head home it’s late.”

“You are welcome to stay the evening Will I don’t think you should be driving.”

“I will take a cab.”

“I will go and call you one.” Will stood when Hannibal disappeared from the room once more, stumbling a little when he felt lightheaded, he pulled off his glasses to massage his face

a few times before placing them back. Maybe the wine and brandy had been stronger than he thought? He slowly walked around the dining room trying to sober up before wandering into the lounge over to a table filled with stacks of sketches, Will quickly noticed these ones weren't of buildings though, they were of people, the first looked a lot like Abigail, but as he pushed that one to the side he lost the color from his face.

It was as if Wills heart had suddenly stopped beating and all the blood had run down into his feet. Again and again he pushed each sketch aside revealing a new one containing drawings in detail of the multiple different crime scenes he had assessed… crime scenes only the FBI had seen.

Hannibal stood a few feet behind in silence, hearing the panic rise in each pant of Will's breath, he knew this was coming, it may not have been planned for this night, but he knew it was coming soon… this was his design.

When Will hears the deep inhale of breath he turns, but too slowly to be normal, he stumbles back against the table when his vision blurs and spins, and when he speaks, his voice trails slowly, like the words are unwilling to take flight. There is a sudden dawning realisation he isn't drunk, he's drugged.

The moment Will realised he'd misinterpreted Hannibal's actions, his words, his intentions, he shakily pulled the gun he has always been so terrified of from his waistband. For an item he is so afraid of, it is still something that never leaves his presence. There's no coordination in his aim and when he tries to stand unaided by the table, he fails.

Words eluded him. Will stared into the eyes of the calculated murder, burning with anger and betrayal, a man he had considered a friend, probably his only one.

"It was you! All this time it was you!" Hannibal remained composed, not even attempting to move away from the swaying aim of the gun.

"Answer me!" Will roared as his limbs began to feel heavy, he pushed himself from the support of the table knocking it and the sketches to the ground as he stumbled for a more reliable source of stability. As if stuck underwater, everything was slow and warbled when Will attempted to maintain his stance and aim leant up against the wall. "Don't you have anything to say? I let you get inside my head! You used me for facts about the cases didn't you!?" It sounded angry in Wills head, but it sounded slurred in Hannibal's ears.

"Why don't we sit down Will?" Hannibal sounded calm, unnervingly calm. The older man stood in the same place as when Will first turned, the stoic look never faded from Hannibal's face.

It was becoming too difficult to stand, to control his own limbs, the fight and flight were simultaneously present, but Will couldn't react to either, he dropped the gun as he stepped forward, an attempt to run? Tackle Hannibal? Will didn't know.

Will's skin went ashen when he stumbled forward, he swayed for just a moment before Hannibal caught him and lowered them both gently to the ground, Will looked up at the man as his vision blackened around the edges… "You drugged me." Hannibal exhaled as he

watched Will's eyes fall closed, he ran a finger down the youngers cheek before gently pulling the glasses from the man's face to place them on the nearby table.

Finally, his design was coming together…

You need to trust me...

Chapter Summary

Will wakes up but the drugs are still overpowering, Hannibal needs to make some unpleasant decisions for the good of his health whether Will fights it or not. Jack has caught on that there is something not right about Will's sudden absence.

Thank you so much to everyone's interest so far it has meant a lot on my first chapter! I do hope this one is enjoyed too... please let me know your thoughts!

Will woke slowly. He was first aware of a cool, wet towel being dabbed gently against his temple, the second thing that registered was the softness of the bed below him and finally, when he opened his eyes the soft diffuse light of the lamp beside the bed brought a blurred Hannibal in to focus seated beside him, Will's head pounded, his blood felt as though it had turned to tar. "Hhhmm..."

"I'm sorry Will, the drugs were quite strong, they sometimes cause headaches and muscle stiffness, it will stop hurting in a few hours." Hannibal continued to press the cool towel against the youngers temple as he watched Will's eyes open and close still heavily under the influence of the strong sedative and muscle relaxant.

When Will's eyes did open for more than a few seconds he took in the characteristics of the large bedroom. "Where am I?" Will groaned out through the dryness in his throat, Hannibal soon placed down the towel and took the glass of water, moving it towards Will's lips while supporting his head as he drank.

"For now, I want you to think of it as home Will, it will be much easier on you."

"You're planning on keeping me prisoner here?" Will's voice broke in fear as he remembered more and more.

"You are not a prisoner Will, you are a guest."

"A guest can go home." Will breathed out, there was no vocal presence in his tone, no movement in his limbs while in the grasp of the drugs, he was completely at the mercy of a sadistic cannibal, one that had used him. Will felt sick at the prospect, and the betrayal.

"This is home, you need to get your rest Will… you just need to trust that you are safe with me, always." There was silence for a few moments after that, and Will closed his eyes once more when the chemicals won the fight.

Hannibal exhaled deeply and shifted on the bed to turn out the light, he didn't currently need any restraints, the chemical ones would surely leave Will adequately pliant for the next few

hours while he put the final finishing touches on his plan, the first thing that needed to be done was a change of clothes for Will, he shouldn't be sleeping in the khaki pants and shirt, that wouldn't promote a decent rest.

As Will lay unconscious upon the soft feather mattress, Hannibal set to work removing the chequered plaid shirt, he slipped an arm under the younger man to free him from the fabric before doing the same with his pants and moved to place the clothes in a plastic bag to burn later. Hannibal gazed down at the perfect naked form, there was no predatory lust present just a simple assessment of Will's skin glistening with a thin sheen of sweat. This was a common thing with people who suffer from plagued minds and nightmares while sleeping.

The small amount of knowledge will aid Hannibal in making Will more comfortable for the duration of his stay here.

Whether there is predatory lust present or not Hannibal views Will as beautiful, both inside and out. But to him beauty does not come in a 'one size fits all' stance, there is a certain truth that bone symmetry comes into play, it signifies good health and good breeding prospects. That's evolution for you. But the rest of it, nose shape, body type, eye color is all subjective to each individual. What many people find beautiful is informed by cultural preferences and swayed by images in the media, but that isn't ever what Hannibal sees… he sees the soul, he needs to if he is to decide who is pure enough to honour, but Will is a tortured soul that is screaming out for help, his help.

Hannibal can say with full honesty though that Will is one of the most beautiful in a very long time, he's no supermodel, heads do not turn when the young awkward agent passes in the street, because most people do not see beyond the physical beauty to get to know the person within, but Hannibal does… when Will sees suffering he connects to it, he has never built up an immunity to it and Hannibal doesn't think he ever will. It's hard for Will to be that way, to have his empathetic mind tortured daily. To Hannibal that's real beauty, innocence in its rawest form.

When Will woke for the second time he was alone, he was unsure if that was more or less frightening, every slight movement was hard, his limbs felt like they had been filled with sand, but he forced himself from the bed anyway. It wasn't until Will stood up that he realised he had been changed in to a loose fitting white T-shirt and black slacks, the fact that Hannibal had undressed and re-dressed him was probably the least disturbing factor of the entire situation.

Will picked up his glasses from the nightstand and walked over to the window pulling back the drapes, he ran his fingers down the glass before slamming both fists against it, HARD. The glass didn't feel like glass though, it didn't feel fragile or make any slight ripple when his fists connect with it again and again, it was solid. Will sat on the edge of the window pane urging his weak legs to keep him upright, the bedroom he was in was just as divine as the rest of Hannibal's home, the walls were pristine white with beautiful sketches hung on the wall, each hand painted by someone who knew what they were doing. They were held up by light gray frames that matched the carpet perfectly.

The mattress of the bed rested on a huge dark wooden bedframe that sat between two identically constructed nightstands, it was like an extravagant nightmare.

Will walked over to the equally big closet doors built from the same wood and pulled open the doors, all the clothing that hung perfectly in line matched the ones in his own closet, but these were all new and looked expensive.

The next escape attempt was to pull open the bedroom door, the hallway was almost spartan in its blandness. Cream carpeting, cream walls, simple orbs in the ceiling casting a subdued golden glow. There were three more doors in total, one opposite the room he had just exited that led in to a large immaculate bathroom, one to his right at the end of the hall that wouldn't open and finally one to his left at the end of the hallway, Will walked to the final door.

The door opened into a lounge room out of a home designer's dream, complete with that unlived-in look that could only be attained from never having been lived in, this was all new. Will began to wonder how long exactly Hannibal had been planning this.

The room is like a perfect magazine cover, the couch is a deep red scattered with fine green silk pillows, embroidered so delicately that they must have taken hundreds of hours to sew. The drapes are constructed of the same earthly green, the kind that is untouched by hands and devoid of dust. A cursory look to the right shows Will the almost hidden cords that are used to open and close them. The couch faces a large television fixed above a beautiful fireplace with a rug laid out in front.

Two large bookshelves are fixed to the back wall each crammed with book after book, with a decent sized wooden table sitting a few feet away, and finally the floor is a high polished wood, dark and free of either dust or scuffs… if anything the color scheme matches Will's own, like it had been constructed with him in mind.

Will stands in the centre of the room as his eye's switch from one sight to the next. The panic begins like a cluster of spark plugs in his abdomen, his mind replayed every murder, every torturous act Hannibal had committed and they still weren't one hundred percent sure how much each victim had been forced to live through. Is that what will happen to him? Is that why he's here?

Will's breathing became rapid, bursting out in shallow pants, he cannot concentrate on anything else but getting out of here. When his heart starts to beat harder and faster the adrenaline levels rose, he walked to the lounge room window to assess if there was anyway to get it open, when he does, Will sees Jack climb out of his car. This is his chance, he pounds on the window instantly as hard as his bones would allow… why wasn't he looking up? "JACK!!!!! JACK!!!!" Will continued to pound with everything he had, but Jack doesn't even seem to flinch. Sobs begin to wrack Will's body as every inch of him shook violently, he was consumed with nothing other than terror.

He can't get out and he can't get attention… why didn't Jack look up? Was he in on it? What the fuck is going on!?

The thoughts are accelerating inside Wills head, his creative mind showed him every bleak outcome in color, he wants them to slow so he can breathe but they won't. When Will begins to hyperventilate he feels as though he will black out, the room begins to spin when he squats on the floor below the window, trying to make everything slow to something his brain and body can cope with. He felt so sick.

Hannibal walked upstairs after the expected visit from Jack, he had renovated the entire upstairs floor into a mini apartment to ensure Will's comfort, right now the young agent is just scared and confused, that is to be expected. But soon, he will see why he has done this.

Will freezes when he hears the locked door at the end of the hallway open, he pulls his knees closer to his chest in a futile attempt to protect himself, he can't fight back, the drugs still have a strong hold over him.

Will only looks at Hannibal for a split second before his eyes fall back to his knees. No one feature makes the Doctor so handsome, though his eyes came close. People often speak of eye color as if that were of some vital importance, yet Will had once thought the elder man's eyes would be beautiful in any shade. From them came an intensity, an honesty, a gentleness. Perhaps this is what is meant by a gentleman? Not one of weakness or trite politeness, but one of great spirit and noble ways. Well, that's what Will used to think… how wrong he was.

Hannibal doesn't speak, just pulls the wooden chair over a few feet away from Will and sits with his hands clasped in his lap, he observes the youngers body language trying to decipher what words or action would bring even a crumb of comfort to the destressed form in front of him.

Sometimes, when a person has suffered extreme physical or psychological trauma (including massive stress), they will assume the foetal position in which the back is curved forward, the legs are brought up as tightly against the abdomen as possible, the head is bowed and the arms are wrapped around the back of the neck as this position gives the brain a sense of providing better protection, so it is clear as to why it is an instinctual reaction to extreme stress or trauma. When the brain is no longer able to cope with the surrounding environment, sufferers of anxiety are known to assume this position during panic attacks… which is exactly what Will is doing now.

"The windows are reinforced and two-way glass, nobody can see inside and you can't break them. Will, you have no reason to be afraid of me, I will not hurt you, all you have to do is trust me, trust that I want to help you."

"Trust you!? You're keeping me prisoner Hannibal!!!"

"You are not a prisoner Will."

"Why are you doing this?"

"It is in these times like these you can begin to take steps forwards Will, people who don't change their life don't change their psyche, their monotonous life prevents new feelings… new ways of coping. But people who are confronted with their fears and have no other alternative other than dealing with them change, they learn that life is okay, because when you face your biggest fears... nothing else scares you. You more than anyone deserves that. But we heal from within if it's to last, this is why you are here, I can't heal you with a few words, but together, over time, we can help you to heal yourself…"

"Please just let me go, I won't say anything."

“That skitter-scatter mind of yours is looking for solutions, stop looking for solutions and let yourself feel how you do.”

“What does that even mean!? And why the hell is there a needle in the back of my hand!?”

“I want to help you Will.” Beside the tears making a steady stream down Will's cheeks, his face was blank, unreadable.

“The needle is a venous cannula, sometimes referred to as an IV, a small needle is inserted through your skin into one of your veins, the needle is then removed leaving behind a thin, flexible tube inside your vein that is taped into place and covered with the bandage you are wearing, it will keep it clean and prevent you from irritating it, it can be painful when it is inserted which is why I did it while you were sleeping.”

“I KNOW WHAT AN IV IS!! WHY IS IT THERE!”

“The IV is to ensure you are getting everything you need while you are here Will, any fluids you refuse to drink and any medication prescribed for your benefit that you refuse to take, it is simply to keep you healthy, we can remove it very quickly if there is a voluntarily intake of what you need, if not, the IV can be left in place for several days and will be replaced until you do. It will need to be checked daily for any signs of redness or swelling, and if there is any pain please tell me. The only other time it will be used is to take blood samples to rule out any adverse side effects of the medications used.”

Will met Hannibal’s stare for a few moments, and then dropped his eyes.

“Jack is already looking for me.”

“Correct, he went to your home this morning, he has tried your cell many times and then when you didn’t show up to work he became concerned, but that is ok Will, I always planned on them looking for you, but they will not find you until it is time.”

“Time for what?”

“You don’t need to worry yourself about that right now, Will please, relax, read, sleep… whatever you want and trust that everything will be ok. I will not hurt you in any way, and when you are ready you will be free. Just allow your mind to believe that you will find a sense of calm here.”

“You want me to be calm!!?”

“Your mind is powerful, and it will devote itself to finding a way forward here that works for you I promise, just give it time.”

Will was silent, maybe fighting wasn’t the answer right now? If he plays along, he could have a fighting chance… he just needs the drugs to wear off.

When Hannibal stands and offers his hand Will takes it and sits in the chair at the table he is guided to, he still doesn’t make eye contact with the elder man when he pulls his own chair opposite him.

“Are you hungry?”

“What?”

“Are you hungry? You slept until two in the afternoon due to the medication, it’s almost six now, you must be hungry”

Will was tempted to say yes, even through the fear and despair he really was hungry, it wasn’t surprising though if the last time he ate was last night. There wasn’t a chance in hell he was eating anything prepared by the recently revealed cannibal though he would choose to starve. “If you think I am eating anything you cook you’re crazy! Human meat isn’t in my diet.” Will couldn’t stop thinking about the breakfast Hannibal had made him, as well as the dinner from the previous night, the fact he probably consumed parts of another human being made him wretch. “You already tricked me in to eating it twice.”

“The breakfast was sausage, dinner last night was chicken… well, yours was. I have never deceived you in to eating anything against your knowledge or will.” Hannibal knew the ‘twice’ Will was talking about, but the meats were exactly as advertised.

“I would like for you to eat something Will.”

“And I would like to go home… I have dogs that rely on me in case you had forgotten that.”

“You don’t need to worry about them either, they will be taken care of.”

“Why not just kill me, instead of going to all this trouble?” Fine if the man wanted to talk, they will! Anger was slowly taking over at the current predicament.

“Helping you is no trouble Will, now we don’t we eat?”

“I told you I am not eating anything that you prepare!!”

“Will I don’t want to have to make you, that won’t be pleasant for either of us.” Will sat stone faced across the table, his plan of compliance evaporated instantly, he may still be weak from the drugs but there was no way Hannibal could force him to eat.

“Very well.” Hannibal stood from the chair disappearing into the bedroom next door before returning with what looked to be a padded jacket, he laid it across the table and stood in front of Will. “This is your last chance Will, could you please try an eat something for me?” Will glared up at the man the hatred in his face apparent.

“No.” In that frozen second between stand off and fighting, Hannibal sees Will’s eyes flick from him to the door before the young agent makes the anticipated move, but again his agile movements were far too slow. Will grunted and took handfuls of Hannibal’s clothing when he was grabbed in a weak attempt to wrestle him to the ground. Hannibal barely flinched as he turned Will’s back to his front and held him there with a firm hand across his chest, the younger released his grip of Hannibal’s clothing to grab at the arm around his chest that didn’t move.

‘He will not get the better of me’ Will thought as Hannibal gently dropped them both to the ground in a seated position while maintaining his grip around Will’s chest, the Doctor used his free hand to press his index finger and thumb in perfect precision against Will’s throat. The pressure against the youngers neck will not harm him in any way, just subdue him long enough to go pliant once more.

“Shhh… you just need to relax Will.” Hannibal’s voice was raw, brutal against Will’s ear, but he continued to struggle against the elder man anyway.

After a few more seconds Will stopped struggling, his head falling back against Hannibal’s shoulder when his body went limp once more. Hannibal pulled the jacket from the table and moved to place each of Will’s arms into the sleeves of the jacket, he crossed the sleeves against the younger man’s chest before finally tying the ends to the back, ensuring as little movement as possible. The last thing Hannibal wanted to do was distress Will further with the use of a straight-jacket, but he wont allow him to starve or dehydrate himself either, when it comes to youngers health, Hannibal will make the decisions.

“Just breath Will, relax.” Hannibal took to lightly stroking his hair as Will’s head rest against his shoulder, giving him a few minutes to calm down.

“Please stop…. Please…” The tears pricked Will’s eyes once more as he became completely devoid of hope.

“This is for your health Will, you just need to trust me.” Soon after Will was picked up and carried to the bed, Hannibal propped him into the seating position with the help of a few pillows before leaving to grab the vegetable soup. It was one of the less extravagant meals he had prepared in a while but after anticipating this exact reaction, he needed something that would be easily swallowed if it came to that.

When Hannibal sat on the side of the bed Will tried once again to squirm away.

“Ok, please allow me to feed you this Will, I don’t want to take alternate measures ok?” Will looked away defiantly in another refusal to do as he was asked.

“Ok Will I am sorry I have to do this, but it’s for your own good.”

Hannibal gently pulled Will’s head back forcing his mouth open. The procedure to place the gastric tube is typically a quick one and no anaesthesia is needed if it is not going all the way down to the stomach. Hannibal gently inserted the thick tube into Will’s mouth, pushing it down just past his throat until the slightly funnelled edge rested against his lips.

Hannibal continued to stroke the youngers hair when a few gagging noises could be heard, “You’re ok Will just breathe through your nose, you’re ok.” Will’s eyes rolled in his skull as the large intrusion made it difficult to breathe but after a few moments he had no choice but to get into a rhythm.

Will continued to struggle feebly but was so weak by now that he just went pliant, he just wants it to be over now.

“Ok this will feel a little strange at first, but I promise everything is ok.” Hannibal used a small measuring cup to slowly pour some of the warm vegetable soup into the funnel that quickly disappeared down the tube in Will's throat. Panic was instant until he once again found a breathing rhythm. Hannibal's fingers gently massaged the young agents chin and throat until Will made automatic swallowing motions.

“There we go, you’re ok.” Will coughed and gagged as the warm stuff was forced down the tube, his body jerked, but was in far too feeble a condition to fight back. He tried to pull his head away, but Hannibal kept it in place while he felt his throat being massaged up and down in some kind of makeshift chewing motion and felt himself swallow involuntarily. Finally, he was too exhausted to fight and went limp as more and more of the warm stuff was poured into his mouth and down his throat.

The process repeated until the bowl was empty and a small amount of water was poured in. Will's body responded by swallowing automatically to prevent choking. The soup and water seemed to revive Will somewhat and gave him enough strength to voice his protest when the tube was gently removed followed by a series of harsh coughs.

“Well done Will, before I remove the jacket I need you to take your sleeping tablet.”

"Get away from me! Whatever you gave me was not a sleeping tablet I was out for nearly eighteen hours!!" Will snarled feebly.

“The drug I gave you at dinner was an extremely strong sedative and muscle relaxant, you will not be given that again I promise. Please choose to take it Will.”

“Get. Away. From. Me.” Hannibal did the opposite by pulling will forward against his chest while pulling back the sleeve of the straight jacket to deposit the liquid form of Will’s sleeping tablet by syringe.

Will did nothing more than let his body drop and his eyes fall closed, he would rather be unconscious, so he allowed sleep to reclaim him.

Hannibal removed the jacket carefully before stripping and changing Will once more, when the younger was laid comfortably and the sheet was pulled over him, Hannibal couldn't help but rest his hand against the soft cheek.

"We will begin tomorrow." After a kiss to Will's temple Hannibal turned out the light and smiled as he left the room.

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Will's mind tortures him with further possible outcomes of his current situation but after his new plan of playing along the young agent discovers Hannibal has a plan for his freedom in the form of rooms, but what will reside in each one and how far will Will have to go to earn back his freedom?

A big thank you to everyone that has read and enjoyed this story so far the kudos and comments have really been appreciated! I know there is a lot of kidnap stories with Hannibal and Will so I have tried to make mine quite different...

I hope this chapter is enjoyed, please let me know your thoughts...

When Will wakes the next morning, the only thing that registers is the warmth of the bed and the softness of the sheets, he feels quite rested, something he hasn't felt in a really long time and it brings a slight smile to Will's lips when he burrows further in to the pillow and inhales. The young agent tries to blink away the remnants of sleep and work up the effort to rise and walk the dogs.

It was as though a brick wall landed on him when his eyes sprung open and the realisation hit once more, it came back in seconds. Will turned on to his back and moved his head to see the familiar surroundings, he wasn't sure if the luxury made it better or worse, would he feel any different if he were chained up in dank dungeon? Will really didn't know anymore.

When Will sat up it occurred to him he had substantial movement back in all his limbs, he didn't feel groggy anymore and the dizziness seemed to have passed also, it appeared Hannibal had told the truth and hadn't given him the sedative from that night again.

Will didn't make a move to leave the bed. Instead his hand moved to gently massage his aching throat, the situation played back in detail with every swing of internal pendulum, it had been awful and it wasn't a situation Will wanted to repeat, but he isn't sure he can bring himself to consume anything Hannibal prepares or prescribes.

His eyes lower to the small bandage around his hand and the small needle entry point sticking out between the folds, slowly he unclips and peels back the fabric, whining when he sees the full IV, it wasn't pleasant, Will hated needles, he always had and he wanted it out. Bringing his thumb and index finger to the thin plastic rod he pulls slightly and winces, it wouldn't budge, even the slightest pull would promote a sharp pain.

Will stopped and hid his hand under the sheet when he heard the door at the end of the hallway open, he looked over at the bedroom door and saw it fully closed and had half a

mind to rest up against it to keep it that way, instead he gripped the sheets tighter when he heard the knock but didn't give a vocal response. Hannibal waited a few moments before opening the door to walk inside wanting to give the new agent the privacy he deserves, Will chose to look everywhere but at him when the Doctor walked inside. "Why would you knock on your own door." The question was more of a statement, but Hannibal decided it required an answer anyway.

"Like I explained Will, you are a guest and these rooms are your spaces for the duration of that time, and you will be given the respect and privacy that you so rightly deserve." Will realised the man had once again hinted that he would be free, he had no clue when that would be, according to Hannibal it was when 'it was time'.

Hannibal walked to sit beside Will on the bed who shifted back a good few feet while still looking everywhere but at him. "I need to check your IV, especially as you have removed the bandages." Will looked at the man briefly wondering how he knew with his hand hidden under the sheet but realised the bandage beside the pillow gave his actions away.

"Please Will." Hannibal held out his hand but Will didn't make a move, he did however make eye contact, he needs to figure a way out of this and the first way to achieving that is to find out what the Doctor wants from him.

"I want it out."

"Are you going to take everything I ask you to? liquids included as the IV is for medications and hydration packs if needed."

"If I don't are you going to force me in to a straight-jacket again and cram a plastic tube down my throat?"

"If I have to do that then yes, I will not allow your health to suffer Will, but I can promise last night was not pleasant for either of us, and I would prefer it if there wasn't a repeat."

"I don't trust you anymore Hannibal, I am not voluntarily eating anything you provide."

"Then unfortunately the needle and tube stay for now. I was going to offer you breakfast but I see you are still no longer in the frame of mind to talk, I will leave you with some time alone and we can try again later." Hannibal moved from the bed with no ill feeling, this was a big adjustment for the young agent so he will let him deal with it how he needs to, he didn't get far though, only making it to the bedroom door before Will croaked.

"Wait." Will didn't want to be around the psychopath, but he didn't want to be left here alone without more information either, he has the vast majority of his strength back now coupled with his years of self defence and restraint training, the problem was though that Hannibal had his own training… one press of a finger in the right place and he's out.

"Why don't you go and take a shower and then we can have some breakfast?" Will nods and began to clamber out of the opposite side of the bed trying to maintain as much distance as possible, maybe he can talk some sense into the man if he seems to be playing along.

Will grabs some clothes provided for him in the closet and walked to the bathroom, closing and locking the door behind him before he turned on the water using his hand to test the stream, it had been a couple of days since he had washed and was actually grateful at the prospect of a shower. Will stepped inside, toes flinching as they touched the chilled ceramic floor, his mind was in shreds, but he had to get it under control if he had a fighting chance. Will turned the pearl dial heating up the thousands of lukewarm drops that darkened his hair before trickling down the smooth skin of his back, his eyes fell closed over and over, each time showing him the images like photographs… they just wouldn't stop.

Hannibal wheeled the breakfast cart into the bedroom from the hall when he heard the water and began to lay out the table, setting the cutlery down with the same precision as he would preparing for surgery. Hannibal spread the avocado over the toast and sprinkled shredded tomato on top as if they were cake decoration, one flick of his wrist and they settled perfectly. There was a joy in how he did it, as if for a moment he was happily absorbed by a feeling of love that played in his sense of calm, food preparation.

Instead of enjoying the aroma of warm food Will's stomach turned as he walked back to the lounge. The table was set but Hannibal was standing and watching the large TV, Will looked at the screen and quickly realised he was watching the news talk about the fact that 'Will Graham' was missing, which he was not. He was right here.

"So, what, you get some weird kick out of watching the news report that I'm missing?" The television clicked off.

The news of his disappearance was on most of the news channels by now. Will was one of the main agents investigating the high profile case, which in turn meant he was a high profile missing person as there was a very slim chance it wasn't related, it didn't matter though as Hannibal had already anticipated this outcome, he had gone to work as usual the previous day and intends on doing the same today. Jack and many other of Will's colleagues were already distressed at the young agents sudden disappearance, Will was reliable, OCD in his routines so there was no chance he had simply taken off by choice while abandoning defenceless creatures in his home.

"Of course not, you are just what's on that's all."

"It won't take them long to figure things out, they will find me." Will still hadn't moved any further, choosing to stand in the middle of the room maintaining the distance between him and the deranged Doctor.

"I am counting on that fact, now please, sit." Hannibal motioned to the table, where everything had already been set out. It was, like everything else in the house, an extravagant setting, the table linen made up of clean ironed lines and crisp white. Will looked down at the food and then back to Hannibal before forcing himself to walk the last few feet and sit down.

"Now as I say I would rather not have a repeat of yesterday, so can you please try and eat for me? It is toast, spread avocado seasoned with spiced tomato and poached egg." For now and only now, Hannibal will allow the young agent to avoid breakfast meats, this was only so he would eat something, the meats would be reintroduced by the next meal as protein is a

needed part of the human diet, but Hannibal does intend on keeping his promise in not forcing Will to consume any pure meat against his will, not yet.

“How do I know that? How do I know it isn’t contaminated?”

“You just have to trust me Will, that will make everything so much easier.” Hannibal poured Will a glass of orange juice and a glass of something else that Will couldn’t identify until it was handed to him.

"Here, drink this, it will help with the soreness in your throat. It’s just black herbal tea with honey and clove." Hannibal said as he handed it over and sat opposite the agent with his own meal. Will took it and sipped it trying to decipher if it was in fact what Hannibal claimed it to be, It was warm and had a sweet taste to it, and it really did seem to soothe his throat.

There was no grace as Will pushed the food around with his fork, taking the smallest of bites while waiting for familiar flavors before swallowing. The meal was eaten in virtual silence excusing the occasional scrape of cutlery. Hannibal though was apparently at his ease, but Will got tenser and tenser as the meal went on until finally, he could not stand it anymore.

“Are you eating it right now?”

Hannibal looked up, maintaining the eye contact Will held. “How would you feel if I were?”

“That’s not an answer.”

“Yes, I am.” Even though Will knew that was the probable answer it still turned his stomach, the realisation hit though that Hannibal seemed to be responding with honesty in every question he asked.

“Why?”

“Could you please elaborate on the question?”

“Ok, why did you kill all those innocent people? Why did you torture them? Why are you eating them? Why did you kidnap me? Why haven’t you killed me? Need I go on?”

“If you have more questions then yes, please do go on.”

“Why don’t we start with the ones I asked?”

“The innocent you speak of have pure souls, I pick my meals out with diligence and knowledge of the individual person and only select the ones that will tarnish themselves with filth… for example, one young girl was very similar to yourself, she related to the pain and suffering of others so much that she went out of her way to help however she could, but over time the world showed itself in true form and she slowly began to realise that no matter how hard she tried to help these lost souls, in the end it was ultimately a lost cause. She very slowly began to turn away from her good graces and started participating in less than stellar activities, so if she was left to her own devises her pureness would have turned black, and her innocent soul would have been lost forever, so I stopped that from happening. When I took her life, I was honouring her… she died in a state of martyred grace meaning her soul would

remain pure for all of eternity. I don't torture people Will, I free the ones who cannot be saved, often through their own faults and honour their bodies with as little pain as possible."

"So what does that have to do with me? Or is this a veal situation? Entrapping the prey until they can't fight back."

"You are special Will, I have never encountered a mind or a person such as yourself, and it's not too late for you, you can be saved with my help… you just have to trust me. Now please eat your breakfast."

"I want the needle out." Will cringed every time he saw or felt the needle move, a quick prick with one was bad enough, but having one in permanently was worse.

"Are you going to comply with my requests, before you answer there is a special dye maintained in the toilet, bath, and sink that turns blue when it comes in to contact with stomach acid, so I will know if you are forcing anything back up and the needle would be replaced." Vomiting had crossed Will's mind and knowing that was no longer an option meant he would either have to comply or keep it in, he doesn't know which was worse because either way it doesn't look like he has a choice of what will be put in to his body right now.

"Ok." Will nodded and looked down at the still full plate.

"Good, I will remove it when you are done eating." Once Hannibal was finished, he waited for Will and finally took the plate away when there were only a few mouthfuls left and placed everything back on the breakfast cart. "Why don't you take a seat on the couch and we can take out the needle?" Will obeyed for the fact the IV would be removed and sat on the couch nervously as Hannibal sat beside him with a small first aid kit.

Hannibal gently took Will's hand and placed it upon his thigh while he carefully wiped around the plastic with a sterile wipe, but just as Hannibal placed his fingers on the plastic rod Will began a soft pant through his nostrils. "This won't hurt I promise."

"I don't like needles, please just take it out." Will tried to look away as the Doctor once again grasped the plastic gently and started to pull, the hypodermic needle grew inch by inch as it was pulled from the skin. Will whined when he felt the sharp point pop free in both relief and nausea.

"Well done." Next, Hannibal held a small piece of cotton and pressed it against his injection site gratefully waiting a few seconds for the bleeding to stem before he examined the slightly inflamed area and placed a band aid over the small puncture wound.

After everything was cleaned away Hannibal turned on a reading lamp beside the couch and once again sat beside Will handing him a book. "Here I got you something." Will took the book handed to him and looked down at the illustration of DNA on the cover, "It's the book I was telling you about, the nature verses nurture, circumstance verses environment… I thought you may want to read it."

"Thank you." Will wasn't really sure why he thanked Hannibal but did it anyway.

“You are very welcome, ok, I must leave now but I will be back in a few hours.” Hannibal stood and so did Will, not relishing in the prospect of being left with his own thoughts for god knows how long. Plus if he were to escape, he needs the man here to do that.

“Where are you going?”

“I have to go to work, I have patients to see and Jack. I will only be gone a few hours, just read, relax… whatever you want.” With that Hannibal left with the breakfast cart and Will heard the door at the end of the hallway close and lock once more.

Will dropped back on the couch once more and pushed the book away from him.

His fingers began to play with the edges of the wooden stand beside the couch, in an unfocused glare, he pushed it slightly and Will’s eyes snapped back in to focus when he realised it didn’t move. The young agent took another survey of his surroundings and realised there were no loose fittings, none. The framed pictures were fixed to the wall and there were no ornamental pieces. Will stood and pushed the stand with more force before moving to the table that stood in place and the lamps that were too glued down and too hot to touch by obvious design.

Will walked from room to room, the was nothing, the only things that could be moved couldn’t kill a fly, he can’t attack Hannibal and he can’t hurt himself, wait what if that’s it? What if Hannibal gets bored of playing with him and just leaves him to suffer a slow death?? There are no razors, no scissors, nothing! Would he starve to death? Will broke into a cold sweat at the thought his body trembled beyond control.

It didn’t feel like only a few hours when Hannibal returned, it felt like a lifetime after his new tortured thought, it was easily four hours.

“YOU SAID YOU WOULD ONLY BE A FEW HOURS!!” Will wasn’t missing Hannibal’s presence, he was just dealing with the latest scenario his mind offered him… what if Hannibal never came back? He could easily seal up the hallway and this would become the young agents tomb.

“I am very sorry Will I had an appointment with Abigail that ran over schedule.” The response did nothing to sate, Will just felt the overwhelming need to move almost without end, if his limbs were moving the anxiety was manageable, or at least he could ignore it for a while. The constant state of fear and worry is like being hooked up to a cattle fence, not enough voltage to kill but sufficient enough to keep everything uncomfortable. But what else is there to do other than breathe, walk, and try to figure things out just a little at a time?

“Why don’t we begin?”

“Begin what!?” Will snapped as Hannibal took the wooden chair from the table and placed it in the centre of the room facing away from his seat in the armchair.

“Begin your road to freedom, please sit, make yourself comfortable." Will considered shouting and screaming but chose his current tactic of complying and sat down.

“Why am I facing away from you?”

"That serves a purpose, right now you hate me Will which is to be expected, but in time that will change again I promise. But for now, if I'm out of your line of sight it leaves you free to talk while giving the illusion that you are alone. I know it's hard to reveal your inner thoughts and this will make it easier to relax."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Just talk for now. I'll listen and ask questions." Nothing emanated from Will but silence and whispering breath, he tried to ignore the flashbacks of the voluntary visits with the man, how he had felt when in Hannibal’s presence, the quick glances at the charismatic man when Will thought he hadn’t been paying attention… he couldn't have those feelings for Hannibal anymore, he wouldn’t.

Not that they were ever mutual Will guessed, they could have never been returned so he should have ignored those feelings from the start.

"How do you feel at this moment Will?" Presently, Hannibal wanted to be regarded as something akin to a lifeless tape recorder, perhaps this would help the flow of conversation.

"Angry." The young agent mumbled.

"Elaborate on your thoughts for me, what specific things are making you angry?" Hannibal’s voice was soft and careful just as it had always been.

"Fuck you, I'm not going to explain myself further! Why should I? You are not my psychiatrist anymore Hannibal you are my captor, and I think it’s a little early for Stockholm syndrome, don’t you?”

Hannibal found it interesting how Will always seemed to curl in on himself like this whenever personal feelings came up. They had always been fine when talking about surface issues like weird dreams and confusion, but when it got down to how the young agent felt, no one was allowed to touch that, Will was usually very verbal, but not today, Hannibal knows that is to be expected though.

"Why do you think you struggle to talk about personal feelings Will?"

Will fell forward in the chair and pressed his hands to his face, groaning in annoyance. "I don't know."

"There is no need for concealment with me Will.” It was like trying to touch a wounded animal, Hannibal’s question seemed to intrude on the young agent’s personal space and poked a sore spot, it might take a while for Will to address these issues.

"Fine!" Will barked, "I'll tell you who I am! I am the biggest fuckup in my profession! I was working with the killer all along and I was too stupid to fucking realise it!! If I hadn't been such a shitty agent, then maybe, just fucking MAYBE, those victims would still be alive! My life on the spectrum has robbed me of a real life and a healthy psyche because I did not fight

hard enough for one! And on top of all that you played with me like a cat does with a mouse! I am a failure!! A FUCKING FAILU-" The young agents rant was interrupted by his own spit, he choked and coughed as his shoulders shuddered with each sharp spasm. Will cleared his airway, caught his breath and made a soft, miserable sound reminiscent of an animal in pain.

"I disagree with you. In our interactions I noticed the way you talk about yourself is extremely negative, Jack who has known you for a long time, can also attest to that. You have never seen your true worth, that is what makes you special."

"Well I don't want to be special and so much for confidentiality! You were discussing my visits with Jack??!

"Absolutely not, I just took note of his opinions of you, it appeared we had many similar ones. As a first step toward emotional well-being and self-appreciation, an area you desperately need to work on, I would like you to tell me a personal favorable trait."

"What?" Will snapped.

"Things you like about yourself. I wrote something to start you off." Hannibal read a single word written in black ink, "Intelligent."

"If I were intelligent, I would have realised I was working with a dangerous psychopath!!" Will protested.

"It's a sincere compliment. Please learn to accept them. Insecurity plagues you, I know. I can assure your safety here though. This may be the safest you have been in your whole life Will."

"SAFETY!? YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT SAFETY??? SAFE FROM YOU OR SAFE FROM MYSELF?? IS THAT WHY EVERYTHING IN THESE ROOMS ARE DESIGNED AGAINST DOING MYSELF OR YOU HARM!!"

"Do you want to harm yourself?"

"NOOO I WANT TO LEAVE!!!" Hannibal had finally got Will into the frame of mind he needed to be to visit the first room, this was clarified when Will picked up the frail wooden chair and threw it against the wall, the only breakable thing in the room, and even so, the wood was frail.

Hannibal stood as Will continued to pace and walked to slide back the wall beside the fireplace revealing yet another door, once opened the Doctor guided Will inside. Will froze for a second as he took in the contents, it wasn't extravagant and clean with expensive furnishings, instead it was filled with partially broken computers, laptops, TV's, keyboards… any piece of electronic equipment and broken furniture seemed to sit on the tables, shelves, and the floor.

"One of my favorite studies ever conducted was the seven stages of grief… it was based on sound research that produced identical coping methods from over one million subjects, you

experienced the first when you awoke in your new surroundings… shock and denial. You experienced the second when you realised who I was, pain, and guilt that you didn't work it out fast enough. You are now moving on to the third stage, anger. This room is the start of your journey to freedom." Will turned to face Hannibal in the doorway of the new room, angered further at the man's constant riddles.

"What the hell are you talking about!!!"

"There are five more rooms after this one and we are going to work our way through each one of them, once they are complete you will be ready. This room will help you deal with two of those stages and the first is anger." Hannibal picked up a solid wooden bat placed on the shelf beside the door and held out the handle for Will to take, the young agent looked between the bat and Hannibal before trying to push past him to leave the room.

"You are fucking insane." Hannibal simply turned Will with ease, his back to his front once more and held him there, waiting for the anger to rise once more at the restraint. "Let yourself feel how you do."

"Stop talking to me in riddles! Let me go!!!" Hannibal placed safety goggles over the struggling agents' eyes before thrusting the bat into his grip and pushing him forward.

"FINE YOU WANT TO SEE ANGER!!" Will's hysterical now, he can't stop the internal tornado that's coming, it was like a vexing of the soul for what he felt was not human, it was twisted and distorted but it was something strong. It burned so bad like fire lacing Will's veins and all he could feel was desire, the desire to hate. The young agent was intoxicated with an emotion he had never felt before, the acidity that resided in his stomach lurched forward and erupted with a swing of the bat.

Red. Everything went red. Will's vision blurred as his brain picked out every moment that he'd been mocked, hurt, judged, and aimed it at a smashing a piece of already broken equipment. The memories weighed down on him forcing the young agents fingers to coil even tighter around the bat he held as he swung without mercy, the glass and plastic shattered and fell to his feet to be stamped on or kicked. Waves of fury rolled as the blood rose to his cheeks, the term anger barely even touched the tip of the volcano that he so clearly engulfed by in that moment.

The sound of breaking glass is soothing in ways Will didn't know it could be, the young agent groans as he tears apart everything in his wake, swinging the bat against the contents of the shelves and stamps on the remaining intact pieces.

Eventually Will threw down the bat when he feels he can no longer breathe... panting and pacing as he grips his hair hard, another burst of anger forces him to make another futile attempt at running for the door, only to be wrestled back against Hannibal as he seats them both on the ground. Snot and tears drench Will's shirt and the arm still holding him against Hannibal's own chest. "It's ok Will just breathe." Will didn't want to show weakness, but he can't stop himself from sobbing like an infant through the frustration. Hannibal continued to stroke the young agent's hair as he keeps up a soothing mantra.

Will's fingers grasp the arm across his chest so tightly he thinks they might break. "GET OFF OF ME YOU SADIST FUCKING BASTARD!! LET ME FUCKING GO! NOOO!!!" Will kicks out and punches back at Hannibal wherever he could reach with every ounce of strength he possessed, pushing hard against the floor trying desperately to push himself away from the man and stand up.

"AAAAAARRRRGGHHHHH!!!!" Then, just like that, the anger stems and Will goes lax against Hannibal's body.

The screams and struggles turn to rapid pants and whimpers. "I need to get out. Please Hannibal I want to go home… please let me out of here, please let me go… please, please please… I will do anything just please let me go home."

Finally, the second stage this room was supposed to promote appeared, bargaining. "Your ok Will, just breathe."

"Breathe in." Will tried to breathe in but he couldn't, the tightness in his chest felt too heavy.

"Breathe out, just follow my breathing Will." Finally, he breathed out.

"In." Will finally got some air into his lungs.

"Out." He is starting to calm.

"In." Breathing is getting a little easier.

"Out." It takes nearly fifteen minutes for Will's breathing to level out and calm, he no longer tries to squirm away from the man just sits, staring off in to space feeling some kind of relief after the meltdown. Only then does Hannibal speak.

"Well done Will you should be proud of yourself, I am proud of you. There are only five more rooms to go… each will allow you to face what you need to, and then, you will be free."

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Will visits the second room and isn't sure if he can complete it voluntarily...

This chapter contains the use of a certain type of therapy, it may seem barbaric at first but I promise there is no pain or torture in this chapter...

I am not massively thrilled with how this chapter turned out but regardless I hope it is enjoyed! I know I tagged it as a slow burn but going forward from this chapter the relationship between the two starts to progress! And thank you to everyone who has taken the time to comment and leave a kudo it is appreciated...

Please let me know your thoughts...

Depression has a floor, a rock bottom, and finding it is ultimately a blessing. Because when you hit that floor, the only way is up… when it feels as though you should stay down, you find a reason to get back up. But what happens when there are no more reasons? Will never really had that many reasons to get up on a morning, but he did have some, whether it was the dogs, work, his students… even his visits with Hannibal… well that last one was probably the main reason he got out of bed on a morning.

What now? How does he just forget those feelings? As much as he hates Hannibal right now those feelings were still there and he doesn't know how to make them stop, every appointment held a few quick glances when Will thought the Doctor wasn't looking, a few nervous words when he was asked a personal question.

But now there are no more reasons that were good enough, as if Will had no more strength… today is one of them days. It's very dark here. Not from the practical point of view, but from his mental state. The tears want to roll down to expel the heaviness in his gut, but they are too stubborn. They just wouldn't come.

Hannibal spent the morning putting together an elaborate breakfast he was sure Will wouldn't eat, he wouldn't be there to witness it, Jack had called and requested his help searching Will's apartment for any indication to his whereabouts. Hannibal was his own miracle when it came to food, he saw a brilliance in food, a potential to help and heal others, a way to show them how food could be appreciated. It made Hannibal happy, food does that, right? It feeds the soul, brings smiles, and bonds people, it makes everything so much better.

Hannibal placed everything on the cart and wrote a quick note as to why he wasn't going to be there, he doesn't want Will freaking out any more than necessary. It was only seven am

and Hannibal didn't want to disturb the young agent, so he left everything covered on the cart leaving it in the hallway and left to meet Jack.

Knowing Hannibal would be there soon with breakfast Will moved to take a shower, he went to grab some clothes from the closet and walked out of the bedroom door but stopped when he almost tripped over the breakfast cart that had been left in the hallway, the young agent was about to walk past when he saw the note.

'Will,

I had to go and meet Jack early and I didn't want to wake you, please try and eat something for me, I will be back by lunch and we can eat together…

Hannibal'

Will screwed up the note and threw it back on to the cart, although he was grateful for the heads up. when he had finished his shower, he sat in the hallway staring at the cart, as hungry as he was, and as good as it smelt, he didn't want to touch the food. Hannibal may have been answering his questions honestly, but Will still isn't certain the food isn't contaminated with human remains… no, no he isn't eating it. Grabbing the plate, he scrapes the contents down the toilet, Hannibal said it would turn blue when mixed with stomach acid and as there isn't any there shouldn't be an issue.

The second the food touches the porcelain the white erupts into a deep blue. "Fuck!! Fuck!! FUCK!!" Will flushes it again and again but the color remains, after a few seconds of pacing he tries to scrub the dye away to no avail. Fright consumed every cell in his body, swelling them with terror. With every second Will practically felt the rise in his blood pressure, but he knew that this was the least of his worries, what would be the consequence for trying to discard of the food? Would he be punished?

Hannibal made his way to Will's home at Jack's request to assist the crime scene investigators, Jack and his team were some of the first CSI at the home, but the dogs and Will's visitors had polluted the crime scene so much, very little physical evidence could be collected.

Jack paced back and forth in front of the couch while Hannibal stood calmly leant up against the wall. "I'm missing something," Jack said out loud to himself.

"Any theories?" Hannibal asked.

"Not yet, well nothing concrete anyway, I think something may have been building up to this."

"You don't think it was random?" Hannibal maintained his composure as he watched the worried Jack pace around the room.

"No I don't, maybe Will discovered who was behind the murders and he was silenced for that information? Or maybe this was the killers plan all along?"

“For what reason?” Hannibal was quite surprised by the astute comment, impressed that Jack figured it out on the second guess, but would he stick to it?

“Perhaps Will is taking some time away from everything?”

“Will wouldn't just leave without telling anyone Hannibal you should know that.”

“Not necessarily, people on the spectrum often have the fight or flight instinct engrained in their every thought, so if something was worrying or bothering Will he may have felt that he had no other option than to disappear rather than talk about it?” Jack brushed Hannibal’s analysis off for the fact that he doesn’t believe Will would just leave, and leave everything behind including living creatures, he was worried about the young agent, especially as he'd been working on their current case.

“No, I don’t believe that Hannibal, why do you believe that?” Jack questioned with genuine curiosity.

“I don’t believe that, you asked me for a theory, I gave you one.”

“Any helpful ones?”

“There is no solid evidence that Will was taken from his home, no signs of attack, no blood, and no foreign DNA. Will’s car is gone which means two things, the attacker came here on foot and took Will in his own car to wherever they were going, or, Will drove somewhere and was taken from wherever he drove to.”

“We have put out a request for any sighting of Will’s car, it is to be pulled over.” Hannibal wasn’t worried about the car still being at his home, he had pulled it around back in case anyone had made an impromptu visit and he had plans to get rid of it by the end of the day.

“The motive definitely isn’t robbery either because everything of value seems to be here.” Jack declared as he eyed up Will’s modest home, his wallet and watch still sat on the table as well as his phone.

“So, what was the motive?” Hannibal was strategic in his questioning, calm and collected he never showed one sign of guilt.

Jack sighed, exasperated with their lack of progress. “I really don’t know Hannibal.”

“If Will was taken from here there is a very good chance that Will knew them personally.” Giving Jack hints really didn’t worry Hannibal, there is no reason to suspect him.

“What makes you think that.”

“The dogs, if Will was attacked at home and in front of his dogs there is a very good chance the animals would have tried to protect their owner, but there isn’t any blood… so my guess is he wasn’t taken from here.” Jack quickly realised that Hannibal was right, if the young agent had been taken from his home there would be signs of a struggle and blood stains from a possible attack, there was nothing.

“Jack, I apologise but I must leave now as I have a patient to see, why don’t you join me for supper this evening?”

“Usual time?” Jack and Hannibal had become quite close over their meals and work on the case, and Hannibal intended to keep everything as normal as possible.

“Perfect, I will see you this evening.”

Hannibal boycotted his office having cancelled all appointments that day and instead made his way home, when he arrived, he walked around the back of the house and climbed into Will’s car. Luckily his backyard sat in front of a large forest, this gave him privacy as he drove through them taking him onto a backroad, after driving for a while he pulled over and grabbed the gasoline and the clothes Will was wearing the night he became a guest, and threw them in the back seat. The area he had chosen sat beside two roads that lead to and from the city, meaning anyone could have dumped the car, the constant snow and rain would cover the tracks long before it’s found.

After dousing the internal and external features of the car he tossed a match inside and watched as the paint bubbles and recoils like it can feel the heat, wrinkling around the burn. Hannibal watches with motionless eyes as a black wisp of smoke curls upwards like the perfect strokes of an artist. In seconds the yellow flames consumed it entirely. Hannibal began to walk away, maintaining a good distance between himself and the deafening explosion. It was as though a fist of orange flame had decided to punch its way out of the windows as they shattered smoke and fire rushed out. Thousands of pieces of glass and steel fell down in a deadly rainfall.

Arriving back home Hannibal picked up the chopping knife and cut the vegetables into perfect matchsticks in the time it took most people just peel the carrots. Every motion was precise, everything even, uniform, perfect. Hannibal placed the plates on a tray before making his way upstairs, when he saw the empty plate sitting on top of the cart in the hallway he smiled slightly but it soon fell as he glanced in the bathroom and saw the blue that tinged the porcelain. Ignoring it he knocked on the lounge room door but wasn’t shocked when he didn’t get a reply, he waited a few moments before walking inside to place the tray on the table.

Will sat on the couch not daring to look up, Hannibal had never seemed the violent type to Will, but then again, he didn’t seem the murdering, kidnapping, cannibal type either.

Hannibal sat beside Will who still didn’t look up from the floor. “You didn’t like your breakfast?”

“I wasn’t hungry.” Will lied.

“That’s ok, the side effect of your sleeping tablets can be lack of appetite, but it will pass in time.” Will was relieved at the fact he wasn’t reprimanded seriously, but knows he is about to enter another battle regarding food.

“Why don’t we sit? I’m sure you must be hungry by now.” For once Will didn’t argue, but it didn’t mean he was going to eat anything either.

The moment Will slides into the chair he is served a large plate of food. Chicken with a side of mixed vegetables, a mountain of mashed potatoes finished off with a slew of thick gravy. To the side was a tureen of fruit that sat in ice to keep it chilled and right next to that, a basket of rolls and to finish it off, a glass of orange juice that even seemed to be elegant in its presentation. Will took note that Hannibal's meat did not look like his own.

Hannibal watched as Will stared down at the food a little longer, "Please try and eat something Will." Not wanting a repeat of the tube down his throat, the young agent finally picked up his fork and took small bites of everything but the meat.

"Are you really going to let me go? You know if I complete these rooms?" Will still didn't look up from his food.

"Of course, but you cannot complete these rooms unless you are ready. Your entrance to each one needs to be voluntary, only then will you be ready Will."

"What's after the first room?"

"You will find out when the time is right." Hannibal watched as Will continued to take small bites before placing the fork back down and declaring he was done, the young agent had eaten more than Hannibal had expected him to so he didn't push the issue, at least he is eating voluntarily now was all the man thought.

Hannibal took away the plates placing them back on the cart before sitting back at the table opposite Will. "If you feel ready then maybe we can visit the next room?"

"What is it?"

"It is designed to help you overcome the negative thoughts about yourself and your life, but if you don't feel ready then we can revisit it another time." Will just wanted to get it over and done with, the quicker they are completed the quicker he can go home.

"The second room, let's go." Will stood and allowed himself to be guided to the sliding wall, once it was pulled back, they walked through the first room and stopped at the door for the second.

"I understand this room will be difficult to overcome Will, but it cannot be completed unless you voluntarily participate." Will nodded and braced himself as the door was pulled open.

Will's eyes enlarged while the hairs on the nape of his neck bristled when he saw the contents of the room. A glisten of cold sweat covered every inch of his body when he stepped closer for a better look, his eyes grew wider as if someone was coming to deliver the fatal blow. "What the hell would I be participating in?? It looks like a god damn electric chair!" Will slowly paced the chair in the centre of the otherwise empty room, while trailing a finger up and down the smooth wood.

"In a sense It is, but not one designed to feel pain."

“So want me to sit in an electric chair?? How would that be pain free? And you want me to do it voluntarily??”

“I do.”

“You really are crazy! You promised you wouldn’t hurt me and now this??”

“You don’t seem to have researched much regarding your life on the spectrum, it’s as though you feel if you can ignore it, it won’t exist. Ignorance to psychological pain can have detrimental repercussions for your psyche, people on the spectrum are five times more likely to experience depression over the course of their lives, also over their neurotypical peers, you Will have shown constant depression.”

“I think being held hostage gives me the right to a little depression don’t you Hannibal??” Will’s eyes fill with tears he refuses to let fall, electrocution?

“I don’t just mean since you became a guest in my home, I mean from our prior appointments.”

“I’m not depressed!! And even if I were, I wouldn’t let you anywhere near me with that.”

“Are you trying to convince you or myself with that declaration?”

“It wouldn’t matter if I were depressed electro-shock is barbaric!! It also wouldn’t cure everything else that’s wrong with me!”

“I promise it isn’t electro-shock therapy, the treatment is a type of psychotherapy that modifies the thought patterns by rewiring certain chemicals in the brain in order to change a person’s moods and behavior’s. The therapy will specifically target actions and thoughts giving them the ability to develop a more constructive way to respond to stressors and situations, ideally these new responses will help minimize or eliminate the troubling sides of your disorder, but of course if you don’t feel ready for this then we can revisit this therapy another time.” Will was torn, he didn’t want to participate in this, but refusal would just mean he was here longer.

“How do I know it won’t hurt?”

“You just have to trust me Will, when you begin to trust me everything will start to make sense.”

“For the first time Will turned and made eye contact with Hannibal. “How can you ask me to trust you Hannibal?”

Hannibal brought a hand to the young agent’s cheek and Will fought the overwhelming urge to lean in to it, instead he focused on his anger. “Will I know you don’t believe me right now, but all I want to do is help you, I’m not going to hurt you… and when you are ready, you are free to leave.” Will forced himself to turn away from the man to survey the area more freely, the image of that chair was terrifying.

“Much of the stigma regarding electro convulsive is based on the early treatments in which high doses of electricity were administered without anaesthesia, this often led to memory loss, fractured bones and other serious side effects. However, electro-convulsive therapy is a procedure done with the aid of a mild sedative, and small electrical currents are passed through the brain, intentionally triggering a small and brief seizure at the mention of things you dislike about yourself, it trains the mind to ignore them thoughts in the future as they are viewed as a threat by the body. The therapy causes permanent changes in brain chemistry that quickly reverse symptoms of certain mental health conditions and is much safer today.”

“So you think you are going to shock the spectrum out of me!?”

“No, of course not, that cannot be done. What we need you to achieve throughout this is the abandonment of your negative thoughts towards yourself and your mind. The therapy can provide rapid, significant improvements in thought processes and is also used to treat depression.”

“You said you wouldn’t hurt me!!” Will screamed, but Hannibal internally smiled at the young agent’s outburst, venting is what Will needed, but instead, he kept his feelings bottled up.

“And I won’t Will, the shocks will not bring pain, only some mild discomfort, it is more of a strong vibration, your body will tense and relax but I promise it will not be painful. The sedative and muscle relaxant will help to minimize those reactions, just focus on the questions and trust me.”

“Stop telling me to trust you!! I did trust you and look where that got me!”

“As I said, we can revisit this room when you feel up to it.” Screw it, Will wants out of here, and if that means he has to play along for a while so be it.

“Fine, tell me what I need to do.”

“Just sit down for me.” Will sat in the chair trying to mask his panicked breathing, still unsure if Hannibal had used the ‘no pain’ tactic to get him to comply.

“Before the procedure I need to conduct a brief physical exam, this is to check your heart and lungs, I will then place two electrode pads on each of your temples in which electrical currents focus on both sides of the brain, I will then add two more electrodes, one on your chest above the heart and one in the centre of your forehead, these pads will be hooked up to an EKG machine. When I ask you questions it will decipher either a positive or negative response to that question, if it is positive there will be no shock, if there is a negative reaction you will receive a shock and this will ultimately train your body to ignore the negative internal thoughts.”

Hannibal talked Will through the process as he began securing the wrist and ankle cuffs before removing the young agent’s glasses to attach the small electrodes to the fore mentioned positions.

When Will began to tremble Hannibal cupped the young agents face forcing eye contact. “I know this looks scary Will, but you just have to trust me. When the procedure begins, the monitors will also check your brain, heart, blood pressure, and oxygen use to indicate any negative reactions, if one is shown the therapy will be stopped immediately.”

Will was asked to open his mouth as Hannibal slipped in a mouth guard to protect the young agents’ teeth and tongue from any injury before an oxygen mask was secured in to place. “Ok I know you have a slight aversion to needles, so I’m going to have to ask you to look away for this part.” Adrenaline floods Will’s system as Hannibal picks up the first syringe, his heart pumps and beats like it’s trying to escape, his eyes are wide with fear when he feels the prick of a needle, then another, Will almost vomits, he can taste saliva thickening in his throat and beads of sweat trickling down the furrowed brow as Hannibal stands behind him.

“Well done Will, you will feel your muscles start to relax in a few moments, the sedative will also make you feel much more relaxed.” Hannibal moved back in to the young agents line of sight when he opened two buttons on Will’s shirt and placed the cool metal ring of the stethoscope against his chest, the rhythm of Will’s heart was perfectly relaxed thanks to drugs, it meant they could get started.

Hannibal sat on the chair placed directly behind Will and picked up the remote to the machine. “Ok Will I am going to ask you some questions and I want you to answer me honestly for each one, because if you don’t tell me the truth the machine will, just yes or no the best you can through the mouth guard and remember, positive thoughts and answers will result in nothing, but negative thoughts and answers will gain a response with me pushing the button. This causes a small amount of electric current to pass through the electrodes to your brain, producing a minor seizure that will usually last around sixty seconds. But remember because of the sedative and muscle relaxant, you will remain relaxed and unaware of the seizure. The only outward indication of the therapy is your body tensing and relaxing… I promise this won’t hurt, you just have to trust me.” Hannibal spent a few minutes trying to put Will at ease before asking the first question.

The more anxious Will became, the more pronounced his intellectualization of the whole process was, in that moment he rationalized and viewed the problem from different angles as if he could force a positive outcome by his sheer brilliance of thought.

“Ok, do you view being on the spectrum is a hinderance to your personal life?” The machine answered before Will did, Hannibal noted a spike in heart rate and breathing, effectively the machines worked as a lie detector but still he waited for the man’s answer.

“No.” It was more than just a slight tingle that ran underneath his skin. No, it was as though someone had attached a live wire to each of his nerves, his body convulsed as the electrical current pulsed throughout him, but Hannibal had been honest, it wasn’t painful in the slightest, just extremely uncomfortable.

Finally, the shock subsided leaving Will panting and grateful for the oxygen mask, ok so lying wasn’t going to get him anywhere.

“You are doing very well Will, just breathe. Ok, do you feel your life on the spectrum affects your job?” The machine answered first again narrowly beating Will, he told the truth, he

doesn't see it as a hinderance to his job… in that aspect of his life it helped him.

"No."

"Do you feel that people treat you differently because of your life on the spectrum?" Will took a few deep breathes before forcing out his answer between the mouth guard.

"Yes." This was another reason Hannibal chose this particular therapy, knowing that Will would more than likely give a few honest answers to avoid the shocks, it also gives him information of issues that he needs to be worked through with the young agent.

"Very good, do you feel guilty for shooting and killing Garret Jacob Hobbs?"

"No." The static noise fills the room again as Will's body twitches and convulsed once more from the sudden voltage penetrating his body. "NNNNGGGHHH!" Will's body strained against the restraints that held him in place with no result, again it wasn't painful just extremely uncomfortable.

"You are doing very well Will, just a few more questions." The next few questions were all similar in themselves, Will offered up only truthful answers, but the last one had him frozen when his body started to react to the convulsions.

God no, Will can feel it, but he can't stop it, he pleads inside his own head, please. PLEASE no…. the young agent feels his bladder empty all over himself, hearing the drops of urine hitting the concrete floor was one of the most humiliating things he has ever felt… he wants to die. Will feels the shocks come to a halt, his vision is hazy and blurry, and his throat burned to the point any sounds that leave it are pathetic and hoarse.

"You did great Will I am very proud of you." Will had never shown his vulnerability, the shutters would come up whenever they were approached, his emotions walled off behind a mask of coping, one he would just wear it until everything was right again, Will hadn't ever known another way. But this time he couldn't stop it when the tears started to fall, it was more than crying, it was the kind of desolate sobbing that comes from a person drained of all hope. When Will cried there was a rawness to it, like the pain was still an open wound. The sobs were stifled at first as the young agent attempted to hide his grief and humiliation, then overcome by the wave of his emotions he broke down entirely, all his defences washed away in those salty tears.

Hannibal pulled the chair up beside Will and removed the mask and guard, beginning to stroke his hair gently as his head lay back against the wood, Hannibal noted the young agent repeatedly try to close his legs to hide his shame though the restraints wouldn't allow him that solace. "Please do not be embarrassed Will, it is a common reaction with this kind of therapy, you did very well and I'm proud of you." Hannibal began to remove the cuffs from the sobbing man's limbs.

Hannibal had never seen Will like this, so deflated, once free from the restraints his loose shoulders shook, still making no attempt to conceal or even wipe away his own tears. Hannibal had seen many of his patients cry like that, and in every case, it was a transition from a person with hope to one without, but only then can you deal with what's truly

torturing you. It's a kind of crying that shows the child within, the type of hurt that has cut right back through the protective layers acquired in maturity.

Hannibal continued to stroke the young agent's hair while keeping up a soothing mantra that did nothing to calm Will. "The effects of the sedative and muscle relaxant will begin to wear off in a few hours, you will be a little confused and weak until then, but I promise it will only last for a few hours." Hannibal sounds so far away, his voice is more of an echo, Will can't feel his body anymore, he has lost control of his muscles, but can feel Hannibal stroking his hair telling him to breathe, telling him its ok.

Will feels Hannibal pick him up in a fire man's lift before he feels movement, his eyes just fall closed, his body limp against the man's chest. The young agent can't really concentrate on anything as he's only semi-conscious, he's unsure if it's because of the shocks or if his body is just giving up. The only thing that registers in Will's mind is being laid on the ground before he hears the running of water and he assumes he is in the bathroom, it's not long before he feels Hannibal pick him back up, undress him, and lower him into the warm water, Will doesn't fight or struggle when he feels a soft washcloth gliding over his skin, instead he just goes lax in the man's arms, no more energy to fight it.

When Hannibal dries him off and dresses him in a t-shirt and shorts, he carried the semi-conscious Will back to the bedroom and made sure he was comfortable in the bed before sitting beside him, watching as he drifted in and out of consciousness.

The world was a blur for Will, random images seemed to float aimlessly around in the pool of his thoughts, as though they were being blown about viciously by a hurricane. A sharp prick of another shot momentarily brings Will back to the outside world, but after a second, he was once again lost.

"That was just your sleeping medicine, try and get some sleep now Will." Hannibal continued to stroke the young agents locks softly for a few more moments before moving to stand up, leaving him to rest, but Will's sudden grip of his hand sits him right back down. "Stay…" The request had no vocal presence, but Hannibal kept a firm grip of Will's hand, and moved his other back to his hair, offering him the comfort he clearly needs in that moment.

Then once again Will retreated into wallowing blackness. Soon, that was all that he was aware of, the soft mattress underneath him, the warmth of the sheets around him and finally his eyes began to drift closed, leaving him blissfully unaware of what was going on around him, then it was just him and his dreams.

Once Hannibal was sure Will was asleep, he kissed the young agent's temple and turned out the light, making his way downstairs to prepare super for Jack.

Afterall, appearances need to be maintained…

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Jack is still trying to piece together what happened to Will and worries a reaction of his is the reason for the young agents sudden disappearance...

Hannibal has to monitor Will's health and the young agent isn't thrilled about how he goes about it and lashes out, but Hannibal sees this as a way they can both finally move forward and deal with Will's deeper issues...

A big thank you to everyone who is reading and enjoying this story! I know it has been a slow burn so thank you for sticking with me and a big thank you to everyone that has left comments and kudo's it's really appreciated!

I hope the latest chapter is enjoyed and as always please let me know your thoughts...

Hannibal looked over at the clock when he heard the knock at the door, it was five minutes past seven, it may only be five minutes, but it was unusual for Jack to be late.

“Hello Jack, please, come in.”

"Sorry I'm late Hannibal." Jack stated as he handed Hannibal his jacket when it was requested and followed him through to the dining room.

"It’s no problem, is everything ok?”

“Besides the obvious, yes.”

"Good, how is your lovely wife?"

“Happy to have me out of the house for a while I’m guessing.”

"You should have brought her along for dinner tonight, I would have loved to see her again."

"I tried to get her to come along but one of her friends from work had already invited her to some function, plus I don’t think she wanted to put you out, or offend you again with your cooking."

“I was not put out, and most certainly not offended, maybe just a heads up of her dietary preferences next time?” Jack smiled knowing his wife’s vegetarianism probably should have been fore mentioned before attending Hannibal’s for dinner.

“I hope you don’t mind me prying but has she spoken anymore of her recent diagnosis?”

“No, it’s as though if she ignores it, it doesn’t exist.”

"Just give her some time Jack, denial can be one of the biggest factors when learning of news like that. Has she sought out any form of counselling?"

"No, she hasn’t told anyone, she doesn't even know I have told you, and I would like to keep it that way." Jack replied.

"Again, a normal reaction, nobody will find out from me."

"I know you can be trusted not to disclose private information." Jack’s tone was matter of fact, but Hannibal also heard the warning that he was expected to keep professional courtesy, which was always his priority. "Of course."

A timer rang out in the kitchen drawing Hannibal’s attention, “Please excuse me a moment.” Hannibal moved to finish preparing the appetizer of ‘pure liver’ with fresh mushrooms, simmered in a sauce of parsley and a bouquet garni. With a side of shallots, lemon and white wine sauce. The food is placed with expert precision on the pristine dish, everything had to be perfect, even, clean… every aspect of these preparations soothed a deep-seated need within Hannibal that he would never be able to express with words.

Jack looks at the extravagant table set for two and admires the amount of effort Hannibal always puts into these meals, usually it would be a night of enlightened conversation between two intelligent men but tonight isn’t one of those nights, Jack’s wife had just been diagnosed with cancer and Will was missing, possibly dead, so it was hard to find something to smile about. Jack had never felt as though he had to force one for Hannibal though, most don’t, the man was intuitive and especially easy to talk to, he just always seemed to know when people were dealing with internal pain, and talking with him usually helped.

When Hannibal brought out the appetizer and placed in front of Jack, it pulled him from his thoughts rapidly.

“Looks amazing as always Hannibal thank you, so what delicacy will I be putting in my mouth this time?”

“The appetizer is foie gras, which is duck liver with sautéed fresh mushrooms simmered in fresh parsley and a bouquet of garni, with a side of shallots, lemon, and white wine sauce.”

Jack took a bite and enjoyed the burst of flavors, “Hannibal your food certainly lives up to your presentation.”

“As always, I endeavour to please.”

“You succeed.”

“I happened to catch the news report covering Will’s disappearance, have there been any further updates?”

“No not yet, we have officers keeping their eyes out for Will’s car but so far it hasn’t been seen.”

“Have you spoken with his co-workers? Maybe Will said something about where he was going that night?”

“Yes, Will didn’t divulge that information to anyone, and his students said he was out of the door the second the lecture was over.”

“Perhaps he was avoiding someone?”

“I believe that person was me.”

“Why do you believe that?” Jack looked up and huffed out a small laugh before he looked back down to his food, Hannibal certainly didn’t hold back with his questions, he was always straight to the point and invested when he was talking to you, Jack distantly wondered if that was why they became such good friends in such a short time because he himself was never one to beat around the bush.

“Because his appointments with you are always scheduled two hours after class has finished, that gives him time to report back to me, go home, walk the dogs, and then meet with you… every aspect of his life was routine and precise. But that day Will didn’t exactly want to speak to me due to our conversation the previous day, I assumed he left so early to go and see you to discuss what happened.”

“What happened the previous day?” Jack hesitated to release the information, but his gut feeling right now is that Will left to speak to Hannibal about it and something happened in between that, he just can’t put his finger on what though, there was just something off about the entire disappearance.

“I left him alone to survey a crime scene, a young girl dead on the floor, he was only in there a few minutes but when he left the room he looked beyond terrified and was covered in blood, he seemed to of had some kind of breakdown, and contaminated the crime scene in the process, that is something he had never done before, and… I didn’t exactly take it well.”

“Do you think that has anything to do with his sudden disappearance?”

“I didn’t, not until you gave me the theory he could have left to avoid talking to someone, me and Will have had disagreements before but he has never vanished because of them, but then I have never reacted like that before, he looked panicked, scared and in need of help… and I yelled at him. ”

“So, you feel guilty?”

“Yes, but I am still of two minds, there is still a very strong chance this isn’t voluntary… but you think it is? Is that why you don’t seem too worried?”

“I only worry about things I can control Jack, worrying about anything else makes no logical sense.”

“You and Will became quite close.”

“We did, and I only wish that I had some information that could shed some light on the situation, unfortunately, I do not, but there are still many positive outcomes so don’t give up just yet.” Jack exhaled and offered up the best smile he could, Hannibal had been right, he did feel guilty, Will was great at what he did but he came with his issues and Jack knew that, but when something was wrong he didn’t do anything but make the young agent feel worse and what if that is the reason he is missing.

“Are you finished?” Hannibal’s question once again pulled Jack from his thoughts.

“Yes, thank you, as always it was delicious.”

“Good I hope there is still room for the main course.” Hannibal topped up the wine before returning the empty plates to the kitchen in perfect timing for the next cooking timer.

“Always.” Jack chuckled, regardless of the issues weighing heavy on Jack’s mind it was nice to take a few hours to just relax and clear his mind.

Hannibal inhaled the sweet smell of the cooking meat as he prepared the next course, there were two things that Hannibal knew he did well, talking, and cooking. The first he did for a living and the second he did simply because he enjoyed it. But he also liked how cooking was easier than talking, how the results were slightly more predictable, and how the pleasure of mixing different ingredients was akin to the pleasure of writing verse.

What could be more soothing? Wiping his hands on a dish rag, Hannibal prepared the main course, setting it out beautifully on the plate and carried it back through to the dining room.

“So I know you have your scheduled visit with Abigail tomorrow, and I know we spoke about informing her of Will’s disappearance, but do you think she is emotionally strong enough to be informed about it just yet?”

“I think Abigail is stronger than some people give her credit for, and as Will usually attends these meetings with myself, I feel it would be appropriate to be honest and upfront about what is happening.”

“I am going to trust your judgement in what to tell Abigail, would you like for me to attend the appointment with you?”

“No, thank you though, I will update you after I have spoken to her.”

“That’s no-“ Jack was cut off by his cell phone ringing and excused himself to answer it, he returned moments later with a look Hannibal couldn’t really decipher.

“Everything ok?”

“A report of a burnt-out car has just been called in so I apologise but I have to get down there as some characteristics match the description of Will’s car.”

“Please no apology necessary, would you like my assistance?”

“No it’s fine, I will let you know if anything comes of it and thank you for yet another wonderful meal, my place next time.”

“I look forward to it.” Hannibal handed Jack his jacket and walked him to the door, he wasn’t worried about the car being found, it was part of the design.

Hannibal cleared everything away and gathered everything he needed for Will’s physical, the tests he needs to do are to check for any adverse side effects of the drugs he’s been taking so far, usually these type of tests need doing when the person is awake as different, more accurate results are obtained. For now though, and especially as a blood draw is needed, Hannibal has decided to do them when Will is under the influence of the sleeping medication.

Hannibal was quiet when he entered Will’s bedroom, not that he needed to be as he knew the medication would keep him out for the night, still he moved quietly when he sat beside the sleeping agent listening to his shallow breaths. Serenity was plastered across his face as he slept, at peace, Will’s consciousness swirled in the land of dreams, oblivious to the physical world. Hannibal smiled at the sight and carefully rolled the young agent onto his back and couldn’t help but look down at him for a while. Will’s features were much softer in sleep, the lines that usually creased his brow were now replaced by the youthful appearance, he just looked peaceful.

The first thing needed was a blood pressure measurement, Hannibal gently laid Will’s arm out flat whilst he secured the cuff around his upper arm and tightened the Velcro securely, when it was in the perfect position Hannibal rapidly squeezed the bell to inflate the cuff and waited a few moments before lightly pressing the stethoscope just below the cuff's edge. The man listened intently while simultaneously releasing the air from the cuff, the thudding of the pulse resembled a knocking sound indicating Will’s blood pressure was normal and strong, he recorded the pressure in both arms before packing the cuff away.

When Will stirred slightly Hannibal paused, taking a few moments to stroke the sleeping agents mused locks, but after a couple of deep breathes he settled right back down. Hannibal gently pushed Will’s t-shirt up under his arms before warming the stethoscope slightly, he then positioned it against the upper left part of Will’s chest and listened to the soft rhythm for a minute or so hearing the normal sounds and rate of the human heart. For a healthy adult it will beat around sixty to one hundred beats per minute, Will’s was slightly less, but that could be attributed to his sleeping state.

Hannibal gently turned Will back on his side to listen to his lungs, the man was listening for any wheezing and crackling, wheezes can occur when the airways are restricted and crackles can happen when there is fluid in the lungs. Both can occur with an allergic reaction to some of the medications Will is currently taking, but thankfully his lungs and heart both sound healthy.

The final step was drawing blood, another reason Hannibal has chosen to do the physical’s while Will is sleeping. Usually an IV is inserted into this vein for frequent blood draws, the same as the one Will had, but now Hannibal knows of the young agent’s aversion to needles that is no longer possible.

Hannibal prepped the site by cleansing the area with an alcohol wipe and held it there for thirty seconds before pulling back to allow the area to air dry, he gently applied a tourniquet pulling it tightly until the veins began to bulge from beneath the skin. Hannibal pulled the skin taut to anchor the vein from rolling and inserted the needle at an angle and when the tourniquet was removed, the blood rushed into the catheter. When Hannibal had enough to test, he removed the needle from Will's arm and pressed down on the small puncture wound with gauze until the bleeding stopped.

When the physical was complete, Hannibal pulled Will's shirt back down before pulling the sheet back up over him and left him to sleep once more, but he just couldn't help the self-indulgent kiss he pressed to the sleeping man's temple before he stood.

When Will woke in the morning it wasn't to his usual tortured thoughts, there were some present, but not the usual ones that often plague his mind. When Will tried to analyse his thoughts in more detail like he does every morning he began to feel sick, physically sick, like his own mind wouldn't allow him to dwell on those negative thoughts about himself without a bout of nausea.

Maybe the therapy had been a blessing in disguise if it could curb certain emotions. The very thing that make us human. You can have happiness, pride, excitement, relief. Every emotion that is considered good. But what would you be if you didn't feel hurt, or pain, or despair? You can't have the good without the bad. There is no light without darkness, but the trick is to balance them, so the bad doesn't seem so terrible, and you can truly appreciate the good… but Will could never do that.

The only relief from the nausea was when he stopped internally hating himself… it was freeing.

It certainly made getting out of bed that morning a little easier.

Will was still in the shower when Hannibal entered to set out breakfast on the table, when he left the bathroom and saw the cart he changed in the bedroom before walking in to the room with Hannibal, Will didn't hesitate to sit at the table, it just wasn't worth the argument anymore.

Will picked up his fork and began the ritual of pushing the food around and taking small bites, Hannibal sat opposite him while pouring a glass of juice. "I have brought you something, a few things actually." Hannibal handed over what looked to be a cell phone first, "This is in case you need me for anything and I'm not in the room, just press one and send, it links to my pager but that is the only thing that can be called from it." Hannibal then placed a paper bag on the table and Will's curiosity got the better of him, he looked inside recognising the contents immediately as feathers, wire and everything else needed to build the lures he was so fascinated by. And a couple of other things underneath that he couldn't quite see. "Thank you." Will was genuinely grateful at the thought, he could never read peacefully when he had things on his mind, and TV held no interest for him either, so this was something to keep him occupied.

"Your going to trust me with plyers?"

“What are you going to do? ‘ply’ your way out of here?” Will snorted out a laugh and smirked against his will at the terrible joke, and Hannibal smiled just as much, the young agent let it linger a few more seconds before returning stone faced. His mind caught up to the action and he was mortified, the smile represented some form of comfort with the man he knows isn’t there.

“It won’t hurt you to laugh Will.” The reaction Hannibal got was textbook, Will stood from the table and without saying a word he walked to the bedroom and slammed the door hard behind him.

Hannibal knew why Will had stormed off, he had smiled, and right now Will is putting every ounce of strength in to hating the man and the situation instead of dealing with the reasons he’s here… so smiling was not something the young agent wanted to do right now.

Hannibal didn’t follow or make Will leave the room, just left the items on the table, cleaned up and left for his appointment with Abigail. Hannibal had kicked himself for not giving Will the pager sooner, he doubts it would be used anytime soon though knowing Will is most likely going to see pushing that button as an admittance that he needed the man, he does hope Will uses the lures to occupy himself though, and the rest.

A psychiatric ward was once called an asylum, yet it is no place to seek asylum, not the true meaning of the word anyway. It should be a place of refuge from the storms that hurt the mind, a place of love and sanctuary, but it’s not. In truth, the asylum would have been more aptly named as a house of torture, for the removal of any hope, the bare walls and bare floors are a more accurate reflection of what that place really was.

Abigail was sitting on the edge of the bed when Hannibal knocked on the door, he received the usual smile followed by one of confusion.

“Where’s Will?”

“I’m sorry Abigail, he will not be joining us today, I am afraid I have some bad news.”

“What’s happened?”

“Will is currently missing, but we are unsure if he has taken a voluntary leave of absence or if he has been taken, I apologise for being so brunt about the situation but I thought it best you knew.”

“You don’t seem too worried about it?” Abigail picked up on a nonchalant vibe in Hannibal’s voice and she internally questioned if the man knew more information than he was letting on as he certainly had information about her own actions that he kept quiet.

“As I said to Jack, I only worry about things I can control.”

“So you don’t know where he is?”

“Why don’t we take a walk?” Walking around the grounds of the psychiatric ward was just as depressing as the inside, Abigail tried to process the latest bit of upsetting news while still

trying to process everything else.

“How have you been feeling Abigail?”

“I feel like I’m going crazy in here, I feel crazier inside these wall’s than I do outside of them.”

"Being crazy is like being a rat in a maze, running and running, never finding an exit. Recovery is similar but the same rat is now looking up and realizing that the maze has no roof, that it is possible to climb out of the top, and that Abigail is how you need to start viewing this place, the maze that you will recover from and eventually you will be able to climb out of the top. Or maybe there’s some aspect of climbing out of the top that worries you?”

“Maybe, I mean say I climb out of the top what then? I have nothing and no one, well no one besides you and Will and now I’m already down one person.”

“Having nothing and no one can sometimes be a blessing Abigail, it gives you a blank canvas to be whoever you want, and as for Will I wouldn’t give up hope just yet, there could be many reasons nobody has heard from him.”

“Or he could be found in the same positions as the other victims in a few days… and it doesn’t matter what canvas I have blank or not, nobody will ever forget what my father did, or what they think I did… or even the fact I had a breakdown and ended up here.”

“Once you have some kind of nervous breakdown your brain is weakened, meaning you could go off on almost any tangent at all that could ruin your life for years and sometimes you don’t ever recover, not fully. You have lost the people closest to you, people you love, by the person you love, you are not here for any other reason other than to deal with those facts and in time you will.”

“Are you going to leave too?”

“No.” Hannibal and Abigail spent the next visiting hour talking before he excused himself to see his next ‘patient’ but assured the worried girl he would be back for their next visit.

Will had left the bedroom a couple of hours after hearing Hannibal leave, he was still angry he had allowed himself to smile, he really thought he was stronger than that. When the bag and cell phone on the table caught his eye he walked over and tossed them both in the trash can, he wanted nothing to do with either, he would rather sit on the couch and stare in to space, he really doesn’t care how petty that makes him.

If Will had to put his current feelings in to words it would be confused, he is trying to forget Hannibal while being trapped by Hannibal, it was a confliction Will had never had to deal with and it was hard. He is being forced to face things he doesn’t want to, and if his interpretation of the Doctors words is correct, the worst is yet to come.

When Hannibal brought up lunch and set the table Will didn’t look up from the couch, still angry at himself for his little slip of a smile earlier in the day, but once again sat at the table

when asked to, to avoid any unnecessary conversation. A simple itch that was scratched in Will's his inner elbow revealed the unknown fact to him that he had once again been given another injection, Hannibal watched as Will pulled up his sleeve and looked down at the tiny puncture wound before looking straight back up at him.

At first there was silence as rage filled Will's stomach, it was the anticipated second bout of anger that Hannibal was glad to finally witness, as things can finally move on after this second impending breakdown.

Will felt his ears getting hot, angry at the fact he had been given more drugs, not only against his will now, but also against his knowledge, he glared at Hannibal and spat out with hatred. "HOW DARE YOU!? WHAT THE HELL DID YOU GIVE ME NOW!?" Will wasn't sure why it enraged him so much, he had been forced to accept he doesn't have a choice about what drugs are being given to him right now, but the fact it was against his knowledge hurt even more.

"I haven't given you anything Will, I had to extract some blood to test for any adverse side effects of your current medication, I thought it would be easier if you were sleeping taking in to account your aversion to needles." Hannibal explained to try and diffuse the pending situation, but it only added fuel to Will's wrath.

"YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE ME THINGS AGAINST MY WILL!!" The young agent snapped, grabbing the knife beside his plate and standing to point it directly at the man. He's tired of being here! He's tired of this fucked up situation! He's tired of Hannibal making decisions about his body!

"I WANT TO GO HOME!!" Both men stood from the table but only Will was hysterical, Hannibal maintained his composure through the latest melt down. The man had also anticipated Will using the utensils as a weapon at some point, and he certainly wouldn't have given them to Will if he didn't know how to remove it from the young agent in under five seconds flat.

"Will, this is a good thing, you need to work through your anger so we can deal with everything else." Hannibal took one step forward and so did Will, raising the knife higher. Will's temper was like TNT, like trained boxers they circled one another, the young agent's gloves were off, it was fighting time. Hannibal knew Will would use the knife if he got close enough to, so he had to be careful, it wasn't Will in charge of his cognitive function right now, it was fear and desperation.

"YOU DON'T GET TO DECIDE THAT WE DEAL WITH IT!! YOU KIDNAPPED ME!!"

"Will, give me the knife and then we can talk."

"YOU DON'T GET TO KEEP ME PRISONER HERE!! I DON'T WANT TO TALK I WANT TO GO HOME!!" Will's voice threatened to break mid shout, but he wouldn't allow himself to appear weak. Not anymore.

"Will, you are not a prisoner, you are just not thinking clearly right now, I am only going to ask you one more time and then I'm going to take it, please give me the knife and let's talk."

Will really wasn't sure what the end game was, but he refused to back down.

In the blink of an eye Hannibal moved forward and grasped Will's wrist hard, squeezing tightly as with perfect precision he spun the young agent around, pulling him back against his chest and holding him there. Will continued to struggle against the man's strong grip until he eventually lost feeling in his hand and dropped the knife, the second it was on the ground Hannibal kicked it away and released Will stepping away from him once more.

"Let's sit down and talk ok?"

"No. I am leaving Hannibal, now." The words were spat out with nothing less than hatred as Will charged at Hannibal who was already braced for the attack, he tried to pull the keys from the man's pocket and swung at him vigorously when he realised that wasn't going to happen, Hannibal narrowly dodged each punch working his hands around Will's torso turning them around and away from the fire place before he injured himself. Will used the man for leverage as he lifted his legs from the floor and used them to push hard against the wall sending them both to the ground. Will tried to pull away from the man but Hannibal kept a tight grip around his torso, so the young agent changed tact and slammed both elbows backwards into the man's ribs repeatedly trying in vain to get loose from the tight hold.

Hannibal had to give Will his dues, he was a fierce fighter.

Hannibal rest his back against the couch as Will continued fighting against the grip around his waist. The knot in Will's stomach threw itself upward into his throat with the force of a catapult, driving out a keening moan which grew in strength, rising into a scream. Hannibal turned slightly, angling Will's legs towards the stand beside them, giving Will an outlet for his anger.

It was made from flimsy wood put together with glue so that Will's socked feet wouldn't get hurt. Will continued to kick out hard, breaking the stand on first contact. Will threw all his anger into his legs, kicking at it repeatedly as the wood shattered and split. Still he screamed as though he didn't need breath… in that stand was every bit of his anger and he wanted it obliterating.

When nothing more stood, just a pile of shattered pieces only then did the young agent stop. Will's entire body fell back against the broad chest as he panted through shuddering breaths, Hannibal loosened his grasp, keeping one arm around his stomach while the other slid up to Will's cheek preparing for the sobbing he knew was coming.

He wasn't wrong.

Hannibal manoeuvred them so Will was cuddled into his chest and wrapped his arms around the shaking torso when the streaming tears started. The salty release calmly flowed into the young agent's mouth, forcing him to taste his own sorrow as the tears burst forth like water from a dam, spilling down Will's face, he could feel the muscles of his chin tremble like a small child. There is static in his head once more but not as debilitating this time, he sobbed into Hannibal's chest unceasingly, hands clutching at the man's shirt.

Hannibal held him in silence, as tears soaked his chest.

The pain came in waves, minutes of sobbing broken apart by short pauses for recovering breaths, before hurling Will back into the outstretched arms of his emotional grief. Hannibal pulled him closer, wrapping his arms tighter around the small frame. Hannibal's embrace was warm, his arms just seemed to radiate protection and comfort when wrapped around the young agent's body and it just made Will's remaining thread of strength fray before breaking him completely, sending him plummeting over the edge into darkness. He just couldn't control the hysterical sobs that shook his frame, he fought to reclaim control over his body but lost again and again, shocked by the sounds escaping his lips.

The panic starts like a tightening of the chest, as if the muscles are trying not to let another breath in, but instead to die. Then the breath comes, shallow, panicked, as his mind becomes static, thoughts replaying horrors in a slideshow effect. Sitting on the floor his limbs unwilling to work…

"I can't, I can't, I can't, I can't, I can't…" The words are breathed out in hyperventilating gasps and Hannibal simply gripped him tighter.

Will stopped fighting and just went lax against Hannibal's chest, he doesn't care anymore, he just feels so void of any hope, Will had always been sure that Hannibal knew more than he let on, but unlike most people the young agent had tried to talk to he never said 'I told you so', or tried to belittle the intensity of his feelings. Being that one step removed Will guesses Hannibal could see him more clearly as a person rather than a problem creating employee. The man always understood the significance of things, he was that listening ear, the one who would just listen with a soft face and kind words. Hannibal had been his entire support system, but now Will should hate the man for what he is and what he has done, but forcing himself to hate Hannibal was harder than forgiving him and the young agent sees that as him being weak… everything was so confusing.

"I don't want to feel like this anymore… you don't know what it's like." Will could feel the hard, painful lump in the back of his throat as the tears drenched his sleeves. The young agent was right, Hannibal didn't know what it was like first hand, but he had been around people with exceptional minds in his career as a psychiatrist so he had a working knowledge of the devastation some thought processes cause.

"Please just trust me Will, then we can begin to work through things, it won't be easy, but you can do it, and you don't have to do it alone, I will help you… this is why you are here."

"Yeah and then what? If you do let me go when I'm back out there on my own it will just start again… you can't fix me Hannibal, my mind is broken."

For the next hour the two sat in silence, Will didn't attempt to pull away from Hannibal's embrace, his fingers curled into the fabric of the tailored shirt, not clasping it tightly, but just enough to reassure him they were staying together and despite the heaviness in his stomach, he sunk into the warmth of Hannibal's chest, appreciative of the simple gesture. The man's touch made the room warmer somehow, making Will's future within these walls seem a little less bleak.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

> Will is beginning to feel a little more relaxed around Hannibal no matter how much he fights it, Hannibal offers up some much needed comfort as the young agent continues to work through his issues. The silence in the room is becoming too much to handle for Will so Hannibal tries to put that right.
>
> Will's feelings are starting to come back for Hannibal when he finds he is still enjoying the man's presence, how long can they both fight them feelings?
>
> A big thank you to everyone that is following and reading this story, I know slow burns can be a little frustrating but I do hope it is being enjoyed! Going forward from this chapter the romance starts to blossom...
>
> And as always thank you for the comments and kudos they have been appreciated and please let me know your thoughts :)

Will was terrified, of everything, the thought of dealing with the demons he has spent so long trying to hide from, dealing with the emotional pain he was trying to supress in the first place, but most of all, facing who he truly is. The young agent has known for a while that he couldn't carry on like he was anymore, he was going crazy, separating from reality, he would honestly rather be dead than go back to that.

But being held hostage wasn't, and never would have been his second choice.

Hannibal kissed the young agent's temple offering up one more squeeze of his embrace before pulling them both to their feet. "How about you go and take a shower, and then you can get some sleep ok?"

"Ok." Will forced a hint of a smile between tears and accepted one last hug from the man before making his way to the bathroom.

Hannibal took the opportunity to strip the bedding while Will showered, replacing it with fresh linens, he also lowered the temperature in the bedroom a few more degrees in an attempt to make it a little more comfortable for the young agent. As it turned out, Will didn't just sweat profusely during sleep and what Hannibal assumed were nightmares, but also when he was in the midst of panic attacks.

Will turned the dial and waited until the pipes spat out the warm water before easing his way in, he reached for the soap and started scrubbing up but he couldn't think about anything

other than what just happened, he had let Hannibal hold him, comfort him, and he had enjoyed it… why? Wasn't he supposed be hating the man?

Will tried to brush off the thought, closing his eyes he placed his hands against the shower wall, letting the hot water pour over his body as he tried to wash away the feeling of Hannibal's arms around him. The young agent questioned from every angle why he had let Hannibal hold him for nearly an hour, but regardless of the confusion, the comforting gesture had made the panic manageable.

When Will finished, he turned off the water and walked over to the towels, drying himself off and dressing before leaving the bathroom, he was surprised to see Hannibal still seated in the chair in the bedroom, assuming the man had left, but quickly realised it was to give him his sleeping medication.

"Feel better?"

"Yes."

"Good, why don't you get some sleep, it's been a long day, and it's getting late." Will didn't hesitate to climb into the bed when Hannibal held back the sheet for him, he remained seated upright and didn't move away when Hannibal sat beside him this time.

Will took the pill and water when it was handed to him with no hesitation, sleep sounded good right now, he just felt too physically and emotionally drained to fight it. laying down Will moved into a comfortable position before Hannibal pulled the sheet back up over him and placed the cell phone on the nightstand just in case Will did happen to wake during the night and needed anything.

"I will see you in the morning ok?" Hannibal rest his hand against Will's cheek and was surprised when the man didn't pull away, just nodded and closed his eyes… good was all Hannibal could think, right now he just wanted Will relaxed.

Hannibal spent the next couple of hours in his office clearing his schedule for the next day as he hoped to spend some time with Will now it appears they have reached the next stage, Hannibal had been basing Will's reactions of his stay so far and his plan of care under the guise of the seven stages of grief, they were now entering the fourth one… 'the upward turn' meaning Hannibal's presence may not be a despised as it has been to the young agent.

Finally Hannibal retired to his own room and climbed in to bed, his bedroom sat directly below Will's and this served a purpose, every aspect of the upstairs converted for Will's stay had been soundproofed for obvious reasons, this meant the walls, the windows, the doors, and even the floors. Well, all floors apart from Will's bedroom floor as Hannibal knew nights were the worst for the young agent, so any screams and shouting during night terrors could be heard. Hannibal had considered cameras with sound, but this was Will's personal space, and that was a huge violation of privacy, a line Hannibal wouldn't cross. There hadn't been an episode so far, but the man knew they would come, he just didn't realise how soon that would be.

The flash of lightning was followed by a crash of thunder and Will jolted awake to the sounds, looking around, the room was entirely dark. No light anywhere. The view outside the window was just as calm and clear, no storm, no rain, but the lightning came again from inside the room, brighter this time. The room illuminated and the thunder came once again, deafening almost.

And once again blackness invaded the room, Will gazed into the darkness and panicked when the demonic face grinning a few inches from his own came in to focus, the man's teeth resembled pointed needles coupled with eyes that didn't blink. Will buried his face into the pillow so gripped with fear he couldn't move. He swallowed hard and turned out of the pillow to see if the demonic presence was still there but instead saw the endless darkness of the room once more. The panic began to descend when he saw nothing, Will shifted his position to lay on his back, throwing away the sheet in an attempt to stop the sweat and let out a piercing scream when he realises the demonic presence is Garrett Jacob Hobbs, and he was now standing at the foot of the bed.

Will shifted up the bed quickly, nearly standing against the wall, a primal urge to back away from the threat, but once there he froze as Garrett inched forward slowly, making eye contact with the that thing, with Garrett, was terrifying. It didn't look like Garrett though, not really. Will's entire body stilled as black eyes drilled into his own.

When Will's breath hitched, a grin spread over Garrett's face, wide and open, showing his overly sharp teeth, the smile of a predator. His clothes were odd though, his body distorted into a stance ready for pounce and there was nothing less than evil in the sight. For a moment all was silent, then Garrett spoke, and not with his own voice but with the rasping tones of an old fifty-a-day smoker.

"Murderer." Garrett's grin became a snarl, baring teeth like a maniac as he drifted closer without taking a step. Will couldn't move an inch, his eyes grew wider as his body trembled hard, he tried to speak, he tried to run, but all that came out was a rasping noise until Garrett jerked forward and dived on top of him. Will screamed louder than he ever has as he fought against the attack, turning with such force he fell to the floor hyperventilating in a way he was sure to pass out.

Will's eyes darted around every inch of the room pitch black room as he scooted back against the wall, he couldn't see Garrett anymore, but he could hear the man moving around in the room, laughing to mock his despair.

Hannibal doesn't realise he has drifted off before the scream wakes him, his body moves before his eyes open and he nearly trips twice racing upstairs to Will's room, he turns on the lamp and approaches Will huddled in the corner, his body is shaking so violently its vibrating and his eyes are unfocused, Hannibal's first reaction is to pull the young agent to him but fights that urge, not wanting to panic him anymore.

"NO STAY AWAY FROM ME!!!" Will is terrified, he knows Garrett is hiding somewhere in the room his mind won't accept it's a night terror, why did Hannibal let him in? His eyes dart around every inch of the room trying to find the threat, his grip on reality completely gone.

Hannibal crouched in front of the young agent, not reaching to touch him but instead waited for him to speak, Will whined incessantly into the skin of his arm as he rocked back and forth on his heels.

“Will can you hear me?” Will gripped himself tighter but nodded sharply before giving off another full-bodied shudder. “Do you know where you are?” When Hannibal reached out for him, Will tried to back further against the wall. Wide eyes darting around the room and Hannibal hesitated, fingers hovering by Will’s face, waiting to see if his limbs would strike out again, when they didn’t Hannibal gently clasped the young agent’s cheeks with both hands, Will instantly started to panic, he wasn’t currently in touch with reality, he isn’t sure who’s touching him, even in the dull light the room spun.

“DON’T HURT ME!! PLEASE! I’M NOT A MURDERER!” Hannibal pulled Will forward into his lap hugging his limbs tightly when they started to panic again. The hug of gentle arms still gives the space to breathe, and finally brought Will back into reality as he grasped the back of the man’s shirt with both hands.

Will rest his head against the firm shoulder and whined again through chattering teeth, he doesn’t know what’s real anymore.

“Garrett’s here… he’s hiding…” Hannibal hugged Will tighter, the man sounded so confused, so lost, but Hannibal will save him, he won’t allow himself to fail in that mission.

“There’s nobody here Will, just us… trust me. Just breathe, you’re ok…”

“He’s coming for me…” Hannibal didn’t move for a moment just tried to get the young agent’s breathing back on an even keel, his eyes continued to dart around the room.

Hannibal pressed his lips to the Will’s temple, sitting with him for a good half an hour stroking his hair and back until he began to calm. “Do you think you can get back to the bed?” Will gave a short sharp nod before Hannibal rose to his feet the agent still in his arms, he walked back over to the bed and laid Will back down.

Hannibal could only think to continue smoothing his fingers through sweat soaked locks while he continued to reassure him, that there was in fact nobody in the room. “It’s okay, everything’s going to be okay…”

“Will you stay with me?” It was almost a whisper, and the request shocked them both, but Will does not want leaving in this room alone again right now.

“Of course I will.” Hannibal leaned to kiss Will’s cheek before climbing into bed behind him, a selfish act he couldn’t stop, he stayed on top of the sheets rather than underneath though as the last thing he wants to do is make Will uncomfortable, but still wrapped an arm around his waist and pulled him closer, gently curling himself around the shaking form. Despite the heaviness in Will’s stomach, it calmed at the feeling of Hannibal’s body pressed against his. He sunk back into the warmth of his chest, appreciative once again of the simple gesture. Sleep came easy when the fear began to subside, Will felt exhausted, he was unsure if it was the medication or the presence, but he slept well for the remainder of the night, better than he had for a while.

Hannibal climbed out of bed in the morning whilst Will was still sleeping, unsure if the young agent would still have the same outlook on his request for Hannibal to stay with him in the light of day, so moved to prepare breakfast.

Will did his usually ritual of pushing the food around the plate, he ate more than he had in a while though but was quiet over breakfast, it was to be expected as he looked and felt exhausted.

Hannibal had planned a visit to the next room and a therapy session for today, but thinks it may be best to hold off from that right now as he didn't want to rush the young agent in to anything he wasn't ready for, so maybe a relaxed day instead?

"So, I don't have to see any patients today and Jack isn't expecting to see me either, so maybe we could find something else to do here?"

"Like what?"

"Well, how about we start with a game of cards?"

"Like what? Go fish?" Hannibal chuckled at the sarcasm in the suggestion.

"How about poker? Do you know how to play?"

"Yes, I know how to play."

"Ok then, that's what we'll play." Hannibal cleared away breakfast, piling the empty plates on the cart outside before retrieving a bowl of fruit as Will set up the cards, Hannibal was pleasantly surprised when Will picked up a banana and began to eat it without hesitation, it was nice to see the young agent eat without having to be coerced.

Poker wasn't something either had played in a while as it held no interest for them, it wasn't something Will wanted to do, but guessed it would be better than spending the day alone again, it did however hold some interest for Hannibal. Poker is not just a card game, but a game of the mind, it's a means of observation and insight to an opponent's strengths and weaknesses.

The first observation needs to be your opponent's general tendencies, this factor is the central core of poker success, it's a must if you intend to become the winning player. Every action an opponent takes means something. Why did the player raise or call? Do they want to win? Or is it just for fun? Passiveness or aggressiveness is displayed in their risk tolerance so right of the bat, passive or aggressive can be construed as dominant or submissive.

A passive poker player tends to avoid confrontation, and plays without a hope of winning, or a fear of losing.

Aggressive poker players raise more than call and are not afraid to put chips at risk, they rely on their confidence or fane confidence to win, because they cannot back down, some part of themselves won't allow that, even if they don't have anything to back up their actions when they are called out.

That was Will in Hannibal's mind.

Will found himself glancing up at the man occasionally just like he used to in their sessions, or personal meetings, he can't stop himself or the occasional inappropriate thoughts slowly creeping in to his imagination, but Will decides they mean nothing, and just because he is accepting Hannibal's presence that doesn't mean he suddenly agrees with the man's actions. The young agent just isn't sure how much longer he can be in there alone, the silence is driving him crazy. The books on the shelves held no interest as his mind was too clouded to absorb the words, and the thought of TV is worse, mind numbingly boring scripts read by mediocre actors… the lures had crossed Will's mind on more than one occasion though as well as the question of what was underneath them, but he isn't sure he's ready to acknowledge the 'gifts' right now.

The sky was very overcast and dark today, even with the presence of the overhead light it was very dull, so Hannibal threw some dry wood onto the fireplace and used a match to get it going and the fireplace is their tiny sun for the day, casting long shadows over the rug. The flames curl and sway, flicking this way and that, crackling as they burn the dry wood.

Will ate another banana grateful for food he knows is ok and Hannibal took a moment to admire Will's lips, perfect and pink, so soft looking, opened and shut, chewing slowly at the fruit.

The man realised he was staring quickly and looked back down at cards, his expression unflinching as he tapped the cards before glancing down. "I call…"

Will displays a quick unexpected smirk, humming to himself as he takes another bite of the fruit.

"Do you know how I know I'm going to win Hannibal." Will smiled as he examined his cards, turning to look Hannibal straight in the eyes. "You have a tell."

Hannibal matched the young agent's stare, which is slightly difficult. Looking at him too long always brought up…thoughts. But now was definitely not the time to be thinking of that.

"Really, and what is my tell then Will?"

"Well I'm not going to tell you that am I?" The fact that Hannibal did indeed have a tell was shocking to Will, it had always been hard for the young agent to read the man's facial expressions but it never stopped him trying, anything to look at him a little longer Will guessed.

"That's ok, I'm sure I will figure yours out sooner or later."

"I don't have one." Will smiled before looking back down at his hand.

"Everyone has one, and If I watch you carefully, I will see it eventually." It's a few moments before Hannibal looks away again and down at his cards.

“I fold, you win.” Will laughs louder this time when he throws down his terrible hand that Hannibal could have easily beat, to an outsider the setting could be considered sweet, but to Will it was just confusing, especially when he found himself still enjoying Hannibal’s company

“So, I don’t have a tell? You can just get in people’s heads.”

“Well it’s what I was trained to do, are you being a sore loser Hannibal?” Will stuck his bottom lip out in a pout openly mocking the man.

“No, of course not.”

“Well that’s good because I Wouldn’t want to upset you would I?” Hannibal made abrupt eye contact with the young agent at hearing the unmistakable anger in Will’s voice.

“Why is that Will?”

“Well we all know your solution to problematic people.” Will looked back down trying to ignore the feeling of anger, the feeling wasn’t constant anymore, but it was always there, and sometimes he can’t control it.

“I would never hurt you Will.”

“You will have to forgive me if I don’t have one hundred percent faith in that statement Hannibal.”

“Please talk to me Will.”

“About what?”

“Anything you want, maybe about how you are feeling?”

“How are you feeling Hannibal? Do you have any regrets? Anything you are feeling bad about? Anything you want to talk about?”

“No, my feelings are not what matters.”

“So, it’s ok to talk about me? We can talk about how I feel, my fears, my life on the spectrum… but we can’t talk about you, and your actions? Your issues? Hmmm… seems fair.”

“This isn’t about me Will.”

Will dropped his cards to the table and chose to push them around with his finger just to give his eyes something to focus on other than Hannibal, because it was hard to hate the man while looking at him. “Ok you want me to talk? Right now I hate you, more than I have ever hated anyone, I trusted you, and in return for that you set me up and kidnapped me.”

“I had my reasons for everything I did, and one day you will understand them. But you kept coming back to me Will why?” Hannibal placed his cards down and focused on the young

agent trying to look everywhere but at him.

“Because you got inside my head.”

“So, you think I manipulated your feelings towards me?”

“Yes.”

“You don’t sound confident in your answer Will.”

“Well I am.”

“Before you knew anything, what were your feelings towards me?”

“That doesn’t matter anymore, everything has changed.”

“It has, and you will soon see it is for the better.”

“Well we will have to agree to disagree on that won’t we?”

“For now.”

“Please just tell me why Hannibal.”

“Because you can be saved Will.”

“Stop saying that!!” Will slammed his fist against the table without really meaning to, he couldn’t be saved, he was damaged beyond repair and nobody had the right to force help he didn’t want, especially Hannibal… someone he trusted.

“It’s the truth Will, if you trust me, everything will get better for you, and that in itself is justification for my actions.”

“With you what hides behind the lies are the truths, and you never know where you are with a liar. What lies behind your betrayal may have been honest at first in your eyes, but it isn’t Hannibal. What concealed my pain when I needed it the most was you, and I can’t allow myself to forgive you for what you have done, any of it, because it’s wrong.”

“I know it’s of no comfort right now Will, but I promise everything will make sense soon, can you honestly tell me that the only thing you feel towards me is hatred?”

"I don't know why I would bare my soul honestly for someone who would never even bother to show me a thread of theirs.”

“Maybe there are things you are not truly listening to.”

“It’s quiet here Hannibal.” Loneliness was Will's only dependable friend, there morning, noon and night, even before coming here, it was just easier. Loneliness sounds like such an easy thing to fix, find a friend, reach out to someone who cares, but Will didn’t want to, the thought made him recoil, his anxiety spike.

There were nights it took a hold of him but all Will could do in those long black hours was find an enclosed place to shake and sweat until the nightmares subsided and he could focus on the dawn light, breathe, drink water. It wasn't simply a lack of company though, Will had the dogs and to him they were the best things to cohabitate with, no judgement or funny looks, just peace.

There wasn't much else Hannibal could offer in forms of entertainment though, he had supplied TV, books, lures and a couple of other things the young agent had rejected. But really Hannibal knew that wasn't the quiet Will meant. Over Will's stay here Hannibal knows his presence will be accepted and rejected frequently for a while, so he needs to think of something else to keep Will's mind occupied, the young agents needs were his responsibility, because he had made it that way, and he intends to cater to each one.

"I think I'm going to go and lie down, I'm tired."

"Ok, I will come back later." Hannibal had barely finished his sentence when the bedroom door closed.

Hannibal cleaned up and sat downstairs for a while thinking about what Will had said, the main thing that stuck in his mind was 'it's quiet here Hannibal', the young agent had always been a solitude person and doubts it was any quieter upstairs than it was in Will's home, but knows there were two differences, the dogs and the freedom, one he could fix in a while the other he could do right now.

The dogs had been Will's companions in the quiet moments and those blossoming's of hilarity dogs bring. They have looks about them when their puzzled, or excited or serious, all those emotions that are so similar to ours. They are the silent comfort and the welcome wagon when the young agent came home, and Will obviously cherished that.

Hannibal remembered passing a pet shop not far from his home, the sign on the door said, 'puppies for sale' and it gave the man a thought. The idea of having one in the house didn't sit well with Hannibal, yes, they were cute, and fun to look at, and he understood peoples emotional attachment to them, but they held zero interest for the man. The simple mindedness of them, the mess, the smell, the noise… all contributing factors as to why he would never even entertain the idea of one.

But he wasn't Will, and this was something that could potentially help.

Hannibal sat outside the shop for a while contemplating if this was in fact a good idea, would it do anything at all to help Will? Calm him? Ideally he would have visited a shelter, gotten an older dog, as it would probably be better behaved, and the young agent seemed to have more of an interest in rescuing them rather than rearing them. Maybe Will rescued the dogs as a substitute for rescuing himself? A puppy it was though, as they cannot venture outside for a few weeks anyway, not until they had their shots, and maybe by the time the puppy is ready to go outside, Will would be too.

The bell rang as Hannibal pushed open the door, his nose wrinkled when he was greeted with an overwhelming smell of urine. "Hello?" A male voice could be heard from the back followed by the footsteps.

“Hello, I believe you have puppies for sale.”

“Yes sir we do, the puppies are pedigree Labradors, they are a few weeks old and all in great health.” The man walked Hannibal over to the corner pointing down into the pen, displaying around eight chubby puppies that already have rolls of fat under their jet black fur. The litter mates mouth each other and tumble of the newspaper, barking and whining.

“Would you like to hold one?”

“No, thank you.” The man took in Hannibal’s obvious aversion to the smell and being near the puppies, making him a little uncomfortable as an animal lover and question Hannibal’s intentions.

“Have you owned dogs before?”

“No, it’s not for me.”

“Oh ok.”

“When can I take one?”

“You can take one today if you would like? They have been weaned from their mother’s milk so you can just get some food from here… do you need anything else for him or have you already purchased everything?”

“No, I will need everything, just pick out whatever you think.”

“Uh, yeah sure, just give me a minute sir.” The man pulled a few things from the shelves in the form of a dog bed, toy’s food, bowls and puppy training matts while Hannibal peered down at the one he had chosen, using a finger to give a little scratch to his head. The puppy chased Hannibal’s finger nipping at it and when he got a firm bite, he began to shake his head back and forth but there was no pain from the mini assault and no malice in those puppy eyes either, they were the eyes of a baby. The puppy released his grip and scampered away just as the man bent down to scoop him up to secure him in the carrier.

“Here you are sir, I think you will find everything you need in there.” The man smiled awkwardly as Hannibal handed him the check.

“Thank you. I hope you guys have a lot of fun together.” Just before Hannibal left he was handed a piece of paper, “In case you have any questions about him, give me a call and I’ll answer them for you.”
Hannibal didn’t knock when he entered Will’s bedroom, not wanting to disturb his nap so simply placed the puppy on the ground along with the two bags of supplies and penned out a note, he left it on the nightstand beside the bed and closed the door, leaving just as quietly.

Will woke on his back and used both hands to rub the remaining sleep from his eye’s and stilled when he heard snuffling, he prepared himself for another nightmarish sight when he turned on his side but the note caught his eye first…

‘Will, I hope this dulls the silence… lunch at two, Hannibal X’

Propping himself up on his arm Will pushed himself up and looked beside the bed smiling instantly at the sight, the puppy sprang toward him in bounding steps that were almost like jumps. As it picked up speed its back legs swung outwards and it almost lost its balance. Then it leaped up, pawing the side of the bed with its fore paws for attention and its wet tongue licking furiously at Will's out-stretched fingers. It was a Labrador and wasn't much bigger than his fist, it was clearly a baby. It was in constant motion, wagging, wriggling and jumping. It was a living store of pent up energy waiting to release itself on the world. It was adorable and for Will it was love at first sight.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Will faces the hardest room yet and reaches to Hannibal for comfort when it's completed, This causes a shift in their relationship for the better... Especially when Will realises he needs Hannibal.

Apologies this was uploaded so late, I haven't been very well and had work, the next chapter will be up in two or three days!

A big thank you to everyone that is still following and enjoying this story, especially the people who have taken the time to leave a comment and kudo it's appreciated... as always let me know your thoughts...

Hannibal had put a lot of thought into lunch, mainly what he could prepare to ensure Will ate it all instead of picking at it and pushing the meat around the plate, he had let the young agent hold off from it for a while, but he needs to start eating it again.

Maybe Hannibal was overthinking it? He always put every ounce of passion and love into the food he cooked which included presentation, so simple meals were often overlooked, but maybe that's what he needs right now? Simplicity.

Hannibal settled on toasted sandwiches, chosen against his better judgement, even the name, 'toastie' it was just a level he never visited. Hannibal pulled out the frying pan and set the heat to low, placing the wholegrain bread in the base to slowly become a golden brown as he set out the cheese and meat, pastrami for Will, a man named Kevin for him. The aroma made its way through the kitchen, announcing that lunch was ready. The brie has been slow baked in the oven so that it's inside melted perfectly, the only thing holding its structure was the thin white crust, any break in it would send an ooze of molten cheese flowing onto the plate and perhaps onto the table too, so Hannibal was careful when snipping the side to pouring some in to each bowl of different meat before placing it between the pre-toasted slices and giving it one more turn in the frying pan, Hannibal always served the meal with perfectly home baked crusty bread, and today is no exception. On the side is a bowl of whole-berry cranberry sauce made from scratch served in a brown hand-glazed bowl that just gives the entire meal a rustic wholesome feel.

Hannibal unlocked the door and left the cart in the hallway as he always does while he sets out the table, he noticed the bedroom door was still closed when he passed and knocked before entering after the table was set with artistic hands.

Will was currently sitting up in bed involved in a mini tug of war game with the puppy thanks to a toy from the bag set on the ground, Hannibal noted the fondness spread across Will's

face, his lips curved in to an unconscious half smile as he looked down at the excited ball of fluff.

“You are happy with him then?”

“Her.”

“I was informed it was a boy, but I didn’t get close enough to check if I am honest, I will re-phrase, are you happy with her then?” Will nodded but still didn’t look up from his game, he knows he should say thank you to Hannibal for the thoughtful gift, but just can’t bring himself to say anything.

“Do we have a name for her?” Will noted Hannibal’s ‘we’ as if they were some happy family that had just bought their first pet and it pissed him off instantly, but still he held the anger down, it wasn’t getting him anywhere. The young agent is sticking to his apparent calmness, Hannibal keeps telling him if he complies and completes these rooms, he will be given his freedom back… so he will do what he has to.

“Tera… it’s short for Terapijia… it’s Lithuanian for therapy, I thought it was appropriate.” Hannibal huffed out a small laugh at the irony of the name, the intelligence of the choice was interesting, but what was more interesting is why Will had suddenly become angry, when Hannibal sat on the bed Will seemed his usual self, well, as usual as the situation would allow, but when he asked the puppy’s name he saw an instant change in Will’s demeanour, his words suddenly held a tone of anger.

“I like it, it’s lunch time, why don’t you leave her in here while we eat? I thought we could have a talk about things.” Will doesn’t argue just nods and puts Tera in her small bed and follows Hannibal through to the table. The young agent freezes slightly at the sight of the food before sitting down, it was a toastie, and yes he liked them, but oozing out of the side wasn’t only cheese, there was meat mixed in also… there is no way he can separate what he doesn’t want to eat, Will quickly realises that was intentional.

“Its pastrami Will, and I would like for you to eat at least half.”

“I’m not hungry.”

“Will I don’t want to revisit the idea of forcing you to eat ok? I promise you it’s pastrami, please try and eat it for me.” Hannibal really didn’t want to go down the feeding tube route again, that wasn’t pleasant for either of them, but he has to keep Will healthy, and if he has to, he will.

Will picked up half the sandwich gagging internally, it looked like pastrami, it smelt like pastrami, but for all he knows human flesh could have a similar taste and smell, after a few moments he decides it’s best to eat half voluntarily rather than to have something unknown mulched up and forced down his throat.

“So how exactly do you think the puppy is going to work long term Hannibal? She will eventually need to go outside you know, and you’re not exactly the dog walking type are you?”

“Well I am hoping by the time she is able to go outside you will be too.”

“You said you wanted to talk, about what?”

“Just about how you are feeling recently, if there is anything you need.”

“Trapped, and needing my freedom?”

“Which you will get back when you are ready, a little anxiety given the situation is perfectly normal.”

Will huffed out a mocking laugh. “Not anxious Hannibal, angry, trust me I have dealt with anxiety my entire life and this isn’t that.”

“Anxiety disorders are very common amongst people on the spectrum Will.”

“I am aware of that thank you.”

“Are you? It is my understanding that you shy away from learning of your own condition.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“Everything, nothing gets better if you don’t face things.”

“Well that should be my decision, but you have made it yours.”

“Can you honestly say you would be happy to continue the rest of your life as you were?”

“I guess we will never know, will we?” Will tried to maintain an indifferent composure as planned but it was hard.

“Anxiety can understandably lead to sadness or depression, it is thought that a combination of these factors over long periods of time can lead to a vulnerability to stress, the biological differences in your brain structure and function also leads to social difficulties that can promote a decrease in self-esteem and this is where it gets interesting. Five percent of people on the spectrum have difficulty looking at themselves in the mirror, they will do it when they have to, but tend to look away quickly, a similar behavior is also displayed in these five percent of people which is the refusal to entertain knowledge of their own condition, these two behavior’s often come hand in hand and I believe you display both Will.”

“And what exactly leads you to believe that Hannibal?”

“Do you remember in my office on the day you became a guest here, I asked you if you had read the books I mentioned, the nature verses nurture and the environment verses circumstance?”

“Yes, what does that have to do with anything?”

“You told me that day you didn’t want to, nor need to read any books on your own condition, because you knew everything you needed to know.”

“So what?”

“So how do you know everything?”

“By living with it daily, I don’t need a book to tell me who I am, or you for that matter.”

“But what if you could understand your behavior and thought processes and change them for the better?”

“I thought you already did that when you strapped me to a chair and electrocuted me?”

“I took away your ability to self loathe, to dwell on issues in your mind that are not healthy by promoting a bout of nausea, can you honestly tell me the lack of those thoughts is not freeing?” Will had to admit not being able to hate himself without wanting to vomit wasn’t freeing, it was, but admitting that is admitting Hannibal’s ‘therapy’ is working, and this kidnap is somewhat of a help rather than a hinderance.

“The only way to conquer something Will is to understand it, to face it, and once you are armed with all the knowledge you need you can fight back, when there are no more gray areas in an issue it loses its power over you… and that is what I want for you… I want you to face yourself so you can begin to move forward.” The next stage in Will had reached was the ‘upward turn’, and the next room is dedicated to that, it will also probably be the hardest room for Will to face, but until he does it, they can’t move forward. Will dreaded to think what was behind the next door, Hannibal’s words were scary enough, yes, he did struggle to look in the mirror because it reflected images Will didn’t want to see.

When Will did bring himself to look in the mirror for longer than a few moments he stared at himself, or at least the distorted image of himself. The mirror showed him the man the world saw, all they saw, somehow it didn't seem right. Inside he was fear and rage, loneliness and frustration, but all they saw was brown hair and the kind blue eyes, but most of all when he looked in the mirror he saw how broken he truly was, people look at him and all they see is Will, but they don't see his true self, his inner pain because he hides it from the world. Afraid of what they would think of him if they truly knew.

“If you feel ready then we can visit the next room?” No, he isn’t ready, because he doesn’t want to, but it’s one more step to freedom so he will.

“Ok.” Will finished off the half a sandwich that was required of him and remained seated whilst Hannibal cleared everything away and put the dirty plates and dishes back on the cart, Will walked over when Hannibal slid back the Wall and they made there way through the first two completed rooms before stopping at a third door.

Hannibal moved to stand behind Will and placed his hands gently on each shoulder, he could already feel the perspiration seeping through the young agent’s thin shirt. “Are you sure you are ready Will? We don’t have to do this today if you don’t feel ready.” Will just nodded while wanting to run, this is exactly what he has spent his life doing, running away from facing himself, and now there’s no turning away it’s right in front of him, the young agent just keeps telling himself it’s one room closer to his freedom.

“Ok, this is a room you will have to do by yourself ok? But I will be right outside, I have faith in you Will, just trust me.” Hannibal opened the door and closed it the second Will walked inside for good reason.

Will froze when the door closed and the contents came in to view, mirror’s, mirrors everywhere, not set out on four walls of a large room, instead the size was a little bigger than a vertical coffin, floor to ceiling with three mirrors and the back of the wooden door he entered through.

Everywhere Will turned he saw himself, distorted, panicked. He ran his hands over the mirrors as if just by touching something real he could keep his mind on an even keel. With so many images, all of them of his own suffering, he couldn't keep track of his own direction.

Hannibal had trapped him inside a box of mirrors, on closer inspection Will realised in the centre of one mirror there was writing, before he had a chance to take in the words Hannibal’s voice came through a speaker he couldn’t locate.

“There are eight small mirrored rooms within this large room Will, one mirror will slide open allowing you entry to the next room when you look at your reflection and read each phrase inscribed on the mirror out loud.”

The panic was instant, Will stepped back bumping in to the wooden door he entered through and turned to pull the handle but realised there wasn’t one on the inside, instead he pounded hard closed fists with every ounce of strength he possessed, to no avail. “Hannibal let me out!! Open the door please!! Please let me out… please let me out… please let me out…” Will sobbed out as he slid down the door and pulled his knees to his chest in an effort to calm his breathing.

It’s as though an invisible hand has clasped over his mouth, an equally ghostly hypodermic needle of adrenaline pierces Will’s heart, unloading in an instant. He feels his ribs heaving as if bound by ropes as he strained to inflate his lungs. In that moment Will’s head is a carousel of fears spinning out of control, each one pushing his mind into blackness, he wants to run but needs to freeze.

“Will just take a minute and breathe, everything is ok… just trust me.” Will stands and braced himself with a hand on each mirror beside him, breathless and desperate. He’s bathed in cold sweat and his heart is pounding wildly, the only noise in the dead silence around him is the rushing in his ears. The young agent’s hectic gasps and own reflection are the only things that accompany him, as his eyes jump from mirror to mirror.

He has to get out of this room, this prison designed with nothing less than hell in mind. God.

Completely out of breath from only standing in one spot, Will stops, bending over and putting his hands on his knees as he tries to steady his breathing. The burning in his lungs calm, but the sweat trickles down every inch of him down, making him shiver.

When he eventually straightens up, he steps forward and looks right into mirror before lowering his sight to the words and he freezes. His eyes widen in confusion and horror when he realises what the words were, and probably would be throughout these rooms.

“Read the phrase Will.” Hannibal had set out the mirrors as little boxes and would press a button to slide a mirror open when Will had read the phrase to move on to the next room, he had also placed a camera and a microphone in each one so he knows when it had been read but the surveillance equipment had also been set up to monitor Will’s reactions, so if they got too bad he could get the agent out of there. Hannibal knew how hard this room was going to be for Will, but it was an important one, and it’s for his own good.

Hannibal is trying to get Will to love who he is, instead of hating himself, halfway home.

“No. No I can’t Hannibal… please I want to get out.” Initial panic at a bad situation usually lasts around ten minutes if the flight response is unobtainable. When a person is held somewhere and forced to face their fears or a threat, the mind begins the fight response rapidly and offers some amazing options, that’s what Hannibal needs Will’s mind to do, because if he lets the young agent out now, he will never voluntarily enter this room again and the design is broken.

Will refused once more and sat back down resting against the wooden door, he wanted to look away, at anything that wouldn’t show him his cowardly reflection, but there wasn’t anywhere so he just closed his eyes.

“Look at you… you're pathetic! Trembling like a lost child. Are you really that scared!? Poor little Will.” The words are hissed with cruel venom.

God. That voice Will didn’t want to hear it ever again, he convinced himself it was in his mind, but opening his eyes showed him it wasn’t. The young agent stood once more and stepped towards the mirror again, terrified, but transfixed at the same time, he stared into the mirror in front of him that is no longer reflecting his own shivering form. Instead, each one shows Garret staring back at him, a cold, mocking smirk sat just below his piercing gaze. “Did you forget how to talk Will?”

“You’re not real.” Will blurted out. It was supposed to sound firm and sure, but his voice is shaking, and it sounds more like he’s trying to convince himself. “Not real? I guess you are right in the physical sense, but I will always be real in here…” Garret tapped a finger against his own temple and smiled wider… “I will always be real to you Will, I’m never going to go away, but you know that don’t you?”

Will stood dumbfounded, he wanted to tell himself this was an optical illusion carried out by Hannibal, but he knew it wasn’t. “You are pathetic… Pathetic and weak. You can’t escape me, you can’t escape this place. You’re not mentally strong enough. You’re damaged, there’s no helping you.” Will’s stomach drops, a sharp painful coldness starts to creep into every cell.

“No. That’s not true, you deserved to die.” Will whispers. Distantly, he knows it’s no use to talk to an illusion, or whatever this is, but he can’t suppress the fear the words are provoking. The fear, the words could be true.

Hannibal leant forward in the chair, moving his face closer to the monitor with furrowed brows when he realised Will was talking to himself, someone? Who the hell was he talking to?

“You know it is true Will.” Garrett insists. “All your colleagues were talking about you, Poor Will, he’s just not the same anymore since he killed Garret and had a meltdown like the coward he is, they couldn’t use you anymore, you were just a hinderance to their investigations, you practically grinded against a dead body at a crime scene!! So, they cast you aside. They just put up with you because they don’t want you to think you’re a burden. Because they want to be kind. But you are. You are a burden. You’re nothing.”

“SHUT UP!!” Will snaps at the words, they are his thoughts, they have been for a long time now. His legs feel weak. They wobble under him as he sways, supporting himself against the mirrors once more. He squeezed his eyes shut, wishing Garrett away.

“Are you going to cry Will? Go on! I do enjoy seeing your pain.”

Through the panic and tears Will did the only thing he could to get himself out of this room. “There is currently no medical detections or cure for autism spectrum disorder!! Individuals with autism spectrum disorder have communication deficits! It is important to distinguish between spoken language and social communication deficits!!” The words were spoken loudly, with effort on the vocal conviction through tears, his fight response has kicked in and he wants out of here.

“Very good Will, just breathe you are doing great.” The second the mirror slides Will rushes through into the next tiny room constructed with the same wall of mirrors, the mirror slid back in place behind the young agent as he wiped his face against his sleeve, this was hell, actual hell.

Will looked at his own feet before looking up, it was an effort to give himself a few moments before looking at the next inscription, but he freezes when a voice came from behind him this time. And he knows it all too well, Will slowly turned around and looked right into Beverly’s eye. Bev doesn’t look like her radiant self though, she looks… sick. Her skin is gray and her body is thinner than usual, when she turns slightly Will grabbed his own mouth to stem the scream and then steps forward to place his hands against the glass, the sobbing started anew when only the left side of her body was present, the rest sawn off and god knows where.

“Bev I’m sorry… I’m so sorry… what happened to you is all my fault… I’m sorry…” Will rest his head against the glass and sobbed uncontrollably at seeing his friend mutilated in front of him, even though only half of her face was present, Will could tell she held a disgusted look on her face.

“I thought we were friends Will… I didn’t think you would be so careless with my life. How could you let this happen to me? I’m dead because of you.”

“No…” Will whispers. Tears unrelenting fell down his cheeks before soaking his shirt. “No Beverly I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, I didn’t know this was going to happen to you... I never intentionally got you hurt…” Beverly’s death had hit the young agent hard, especially when they still couldn’t find the perpetrator and now he never will because he’s stuck here, Will had no idea how close to the truth he actually was.

“Apologies won’t help anyone of us.” Beverly’s voice was calm and cold, a far cry from what it was in life. “You were stupid Will, you put me in danger. Take responsibility for what you

did.” Hannibal watched the broken interaction between Will and his reflection, though he guessed it wasn’t his own reflection Will was conversing with.

“I do, I know it’s my fault, really I do… I’m sorry Beverly. Please forgive me.”

“Is that what you want? Forgiveness? Do you think you deserve forgiveness? After what you did to me?” Will pressed himself closer to the glass and closed his eyes, the pain a raging wave inside him, overwhelming him. This is too much. He can’t look at her. But he also can’t look away, he misses her.

“I know I don’t deserve it.” Will whines out, he opens his eyes again to see Bev one more time.

“No, you are right, you don’t deserve it.” Bev says coldly, before stepping back away from the mirror into the darkness until she was gone.

This hits hard and deep, Will closed his eyes again. “Please stop.” He whimpers, pressing both hands against his aching head. “Please…” He walks to the mirror and began to recite the phrase.

“People with autism spectrum disorder often prefer to be alone in almost every aspect of their life, this can show in physical ways such as resisting being cuddled, hugged, held or touched but has a large impact on their social life too, people with autism spectrum disorder will usually fail to establish friendships with peers, holds no interest in sharing interests, enjoyment, or achievements with others by retreating into their own world and will rarely ask for help from others.”

“Well done Will, you are doing very well.” Hannibal pushed the button to slide back the second door and Will only hesitates for a moment before walking through. Hannibal had not anticipated hallucinations appearing for Will, that was both a breakthrough and terrifying all at once… the human mind really is exceptional though and provides very unique coping methods.

Will heard it a few seconds after the door closed, it wasn’t a voice this time though, there was no reflection because there wasn’t one to begin with, just a wail… a baby’s wail. The scream was primal. It had a raw intensity to it that told of urgency, of desperate need. The child's scream came from a place of terror, telling of a mind lost in absolute fear, Will didn’t need to question why he had an urge to protect the baby he couldn’t even see, a paternal instinct took over every inch of him to protect the baby, his baby, that had been so cruelly taken away. He needed to get out of this room, this had been the worst one yet.

“Adults with autism spectrum disorder often care deeply about things but lack the ability to spontaneously develop empathic and socially connected typical behavior. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder often want to socially interact but lack the ability to develop the effective social interaction skills needed…. Oh god…” Will whined and sniffled halfway through the words, this was just too hard. “They can sometimes be perceived as rude by others for their lack of eye contact, their apparent appearance of not listening or focusing when a person speaks to them is sometimes seen as irritating and rude.” Was that how people saw him? Was that his everyday behavior but he had just blinded himself to it? Will squeezed

past the mirror when it started to slide open before it was even open all the way, he just needed to be away from that crying, not being able to do anything about it tore him apart inside without really understanding why.

“This is the last room of this kind Will and then things will become easier.”

There was no other reflection than his own in the next small room, but it wasn’t Will, not really, the smile on his reflective face was mocking and didn’t match his own, it was like he could see everything that was wrong with him being displayed right back to him… he was actually seeing himself, literally. God no. No, anything, anyone, but not this. He can’t deal with what his reflection has to offer him, he turned and tried desperately to pry open the mirrored wall, but it wouldn’t budge. “What’s wrong with you Will? Or should I say what’s right?” His reflection laughed when he looked away. “LOOK AT ME WILL!! LOOK AT US!! SEEEEEE!!” He sounds so close, Will turns back around hesitantly and the image is now right in front of him, and he’s not a reflection anymore, he’s real, he’s stepped out of the mirror and is nose to nose with him.

Will’s image leans in so close he can physically feel the breath against his ear. “The only way to escape yourself… is to kill yourself… but yet we knew that already didn’t we? It’s just a thought we keep locked away for later use…” Will lunged forward in an effort to push the reflection away and crashed against the mirror in front of him, once again he is nose to nose with his reflection, but his actual reflection this time.

The fear is gone, replaced with a hazy numbness, he looks down to recite the last phrase…

“People on the autism disorder spectrum will often engage in repetitive movements, this can lead to specific rituals or routines and if these are disrupted, the sufferer will become disturbed and upset, the sufferer may also become obsessed by intrical details or preoccupation with certain topics that can lead to severe sweating and sleep disturbances, and are often plagued by nightmares.”

Once again, the mirror slides and Will walks through, there are no mirrors in this small room, it represents an actual vertical coffin, the young agent takes a moment to breathe without the horrors of the reflections. Finally Will feels relief, it’s over, he’s out, until Hannibal’s voice echo’s across the speaker once more, “I am very proud of you Will, now you have faced the truths of who you really are, you need to embrace the positives of yourself.”

The reflections and their venomous words are still echoing inside his head, it added to the crushing realisation that it wasn’t over yet. Will still feels the pain of each room sharp and cold, but still, he forces himself forward when the wood slides open.

The reflections are gone this time, the mirrors are empty, it’s silent again until his eyes fall to the next inscription.

“I have faith in you Will…” The voice didn’t come from the speaker this time, it was Hannibal’s voice yes, but it came from the mirror… why was his mind offering him Hannibal?”

“Attention to detail is considered a talent amongst people on the spectrum, there is both a thoroughness and accuracy in their actions that can be a real plus in jobs that require that skill such as quality control. They often maintain a high level of Integrity, honesty, loyalty and commitment.”

Hannibal’s voice came through the speaker this time, pulling Will from the words. “Will I would like you to give me two parts of that statement that you agree with about yourself and why.” The negatives in each room were to help Will face what he considered to be the worst things about being on the spectrum, the positives are to show Will that through all the things he did hate about himself, there were just as many good qualities.

“I’m honest and loyal.”

“Tell me how you display those.”

Will looked back at Hannibal’s reflection, it smiled but not condescending or cruel, supportive and kind, the smile he used to enjoy seeing before all this happened.

“Because I always offer the truth, so I expect it in return, I was also loyal to my dogs and my friends until I had that taken away from me.”

“Well done Will, you are so close.”

Will read out the phrase fast in the next room when Hannibal’s supportive image was once again behind the mirror…

And the next…

And the next…

When Will ended up in the small room he started in he burst through the door the second it was pulled open and crashed right in to Hannibal’s open arms, the young agent grasped the back of the man’s shirt hard with clasped fingers as he attempted to calm his breathing. Hannibal wrapped and arm around Will’s back while the other moved to the young agent’s hair pulling him closer, Hannibal’s embrace was warm, his strong arms seemed protective to Will when they were wrapped around his body, the world fear from the rooms melted away as he squeezed him back, not wanting the moment to end.

“Tell me what you saw in the mirrors Will.” Now that Hannibal knows Will’s positives about himself, they can discuss them and whatever else the young agent saw in the remaining therapy sessions.

“They … they reflected people,” he says quietly. “First Garrett, then… Beverly, then I heard a baby crying... my baby.” Will began to sob into Hannibal’s chest, “And then I saw myself for who I really was… they were talking to me. Telling me things. Horrible things, that I’m to blame for Beverly’s death, and that I’m a burden. Not good enough… and it’s all true.” Will trembles against Hannibal and falls silent, the only noise is the wretched sobs until he speaks again.

Hannibal pulls him into another hug and Will sinks into it gratefully. He tries not to, but he can’t keep his mind from thinking, knowing, that some things the reflections told him were true. Some. And a small but persistent voice is still asking if it would be better to just kill himself.

The only other way is to find a way to process everything that has happened in the past. Therapy. It was the reason he went to see Hannibal in the first place, he had understandably stopped trying after being held here against his will. But why did his mind offer up Hannibal in the last rooms? The man’s reflection was the only one that had offered comfort and support, the panic had descended when he saw Hannibal, it made him feel, safe?

Maybe Hannibal is the right person to be giving him help? Maybe together they can work through this…

"Please help me Hannibal..."

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

I hope everyone had an amazing Christmas and New Year! Apologies that I haven't uploaded for a while the holidays and work have been hectic...

I am so sorry this chapter has taken so long, I put this story on hold because I got bad writers block with it! But I am now back on track and the next few chapters have already been written so I wont leave people waiting long between chapters this time!

Hannibal tries a different approach with mixed results, Will finally feels a little less angry at Hannibal after a few true words, maybe a bridge or two can be healed between the two?

A big thank you to everyone and anyone that is still following this story, especially the ones that have left a comment and a kudo's! I hope this chapter is enjoyed, and as always please let me know your thoughts!

Tears blur Will’s vision. His fists are clenched tight to Hannibal’s back, fingernails digging into the fabric so hard they almost break. The panic starts like a tightening of the chest, as if the muscles are trying not to let in another breath, but instead to die. Then the breath comes, too shallow to be normal, his lungs unable to move much against the suddenly heavy ribs, then Will’s mind becomes static, the thoughts are accelerating inside Will’s head and although they are making no sense he wants them to slow to something his brain and body can cope with, it’s too much! Everything is too much. Will’s remaining thread of strength frayed before breaking completely, sending him plummeting over the edge and into the abyss of darkness. Hysterical sobs shook Will’s frame, threatening to tear him apart from the inside out as he fought to reclaim control over his body, shocked by the sounds escaping from deep within his chest.

The panic and despair forces him to push away from Hannibal’s embrace and when the room begins a rapid spin Will braces himself against the wall before falling to squat on the floor, but just like that he is back on his feet, moving around the room as though there's a hurricane inside of him, he's moving as though his brain is demanding the energetic expenditure of an athlete but won't tell his limbs what to do. Hannibal knows that Will is in the midst of yet another panic attack when he bolts from the room, through the hallway and pulls the exit door handle hard, sobbing harder when it doesn’t budge. Will only stills for a moment before he explodes into motion again and suddenly he's taking. Talking like he doesn't have enough time to say what he needs to.

Will’s words are crowded together and some are missing, his sentences are fragmented and his thoughts seem to jump from one thing to another. All of Will’s fears are tumbling out

unchecked by his brain as though he's in some kind of mental free-fall, unable to analyze things or assess risk. Hannibal doesn't approach or attempt to restrain him, just watches Will as he paces from room to room until finally he sinks into a foetal position beside the exit door, only then does Hannibal crouch down in front of the shaking form.

Hannibal had lost count of the panic attacks by this point, but they had been expected. Will had been kidnapped and confined to three rooms, and his only reprieve from them rooms were the entrances to even more daunting spaces. So the panic attacks were more than expected, they were understandable.

Still, expected or not, that didn't make them any easier to watch.

Hannibal reaches out to the sobbing form, placing a hand on each trembling shoulder in an effort to calm, but it does very little. Will can hear more than feel his own shaky, panting breaths, each one catches in his throat and forces a out a pained sound, but he can't stop it… every horrific image floods his mind and forces beads of sweat to cover every inch of trembling skin.

"Will?" Finally the young agent releases his grip on his own hair and looks up, startled. Freezing where he is, hands trembling, eyes full of tears, bottom lip quivering, mouth gasping for air until Will finally lurches forward, collapsing back into Hannibal's arms, causing the latter to stumble backwards at the unexpected action until he sits rested against the wall and pulls the young agent the rest of the way to wrap a protective arm around him. Will buries his face in Hannibal's chest, his body heaving with the difficulty it takes to just draw one breath, his fists clench tight to the fabric of the man's shirt as though it could somehow ground his mental freefall. Hannibal simply tightens his arms around the trembling form, one palm on his shoulder blade and the other on the small of his back, holding Will close to him.

"Will, you have to breathe." Will's chest movements remain sporadic as he gasps for breath that isn't there, he can't form words… his throat is constricted, he can't breathe.

"I've got you. Breathe ok? I've got you Will, everything will be ok." Hannibal murmurs, his lips pressed close to the side of Will's head. "I've got you."

Will counts in his head, he tries to time his breaths hoping to force them back into normal rhythm, he manages to inhale once smoothly but exhales and hiccups, panic rising back up in his throat when the images of the rooms invade his mind once more. Will tries to focus on Hannibal's hands around him, his fingertips pressing in hard enough to be reassuring, the warmth of his body, the scratch of stubble as Hannibal rests his head against Will's own. The rise and fall of Hannibal's chest is soothing, closing his eyes Will's sinks into his steadily breathing chest... holding himself there until they're in tune, exhaling in one big breath. He inhales choppily, exhales again. Inhales, his breath hitches, exhales. Inhales, exhales, hiccups, exhales.

Will pants against Hannibal's shoulder, aware of his fingers still trebling around the fabric he is clutching, his heart still pounding. Will doubts he could stand if he tried, so he doesn't try, instead he sits there, trembling and breathless in Hannibal's arms as he fights to regain control of his body. The time seems to pass too slowly to be normal, each minute fades into the next and it takes nearly an hour for Will's breathing to become relatively normally again,

but Hannibal doesn't rush the young agent, just sits and holds Will in the tightest of embraces while still giving the space to breathe. "I-It's never going to stop... I'm broken."

Hannibal tightens his arms around Will's form, tucking his head closer against the other man. "The deepest of despair will fashion the strongest of believers Will, when there is no other way out of the darkness of your mind but to ask for help, that is when you reach the road to healing, it brings a light to shine a way to better times, if you call Will, there comes an answer… you just have to want it, it's hard to face your biggest fears about yourself, but until you do, you will never be free, and that is why you are here Will. All I want to do is help you, and for that to happen you have to trust me." Together they sit, Will's hands fisted tight to Hannibal's shirt, head tucked into his shoulder.

There is a silence between the two, as Hannibal keeps his arms tight around the trembling form and moves a hand to stroke through the tousled locks. Without hesitation or an attempt to mask his action Hannibal inhales deeply at Will's hair, the scent is something he has never smelt before, it's a mix between lavender and an open field, it's soothing, and for only a moment, Hannibal is sure that Will leans into the action.

"I want it to go away." Will says, it's almost a plead, as if Hannibal could press a single button and all his minds trauma would disappear, but there isn't, and he can't. Will is scared, really scared, and he's angry... at everything! Everything is just so disjointed these days. Sometimes Will doesn't really know where he is or what's going on, like he would wake any moment and everything would be normal, but he never does. Every time Will thinks he's back on an even keel the enormity of Hannibal's betrayal rushes back to pull him down again, the betrayal was disgusting and it hurt, really hurt, from the second Will had woken to his new reality he had sworn that he would hate Hannibal until the day he died, he told himself that he would never accept and work with this situation and sometimes time passes so strangely, as though he were being forced to live his new reality in slow-mo and that just made everything harder.

But the only person he has ever trusted is Hannibal, and that hasn't changed.

"Will can you look at me?" Will hadn't even realized his eyes were squeezed closed tightly, but he manages to shake his head at Hannibal's request, refusing to pull himself from the man's chest.

"That's ok, I'm going to carry you through to the bedroom now ok? You just need some rest." Will thinks he nods when there's a gentle, warm hand under his knees and behind his back slowly lifting him up from the ground. Will wraps an arm around Hannibal's neck for support as he's pressed firmly against the soft but solid chest and a wave of comfort soothes over him and only when Will feels his body sink back into the soft mattress does he open his eyes, but breathing is still difficult, every time he feels as though he's calm, the images of the room invade his mind again and sends him right back into that freefall of panic.

"Hannibal…" Will whimpers out at the rising panic threatening to overtake once more, his eyes dart rapidly around the room, there is nothing to ground him, nothing to quell the fear. "I can't breathe." Hannibal moves to sit beside Will and places a warm hand against the one clasped in a death grip to his own shirt, whilst moving the other to stroke through Will's hair.

“Can you feel me breathing? Can you feel my chest is moving up and down?” There’s a pause and no verbal answer, but a slight nod of the head is offered up when Will realises he can’t find his voice.

“Can you try to breathe with me? We’ll breathe in for a few seconds, hold our breath, and then breathe out ok? Just focus on trying to match the way I’m breathing Will.” Hannibal begins to count, keeping his voice low and soothing and after a few minutes of the mirrored action the panic in Will begins to dissipate forcing his muscles into a more relaxed and less tensed form, the calmness that comes still leaves his body shaking, but breathing normally.

“I’m sorry.” Will breathes out, finally letting go of Hannibal’s shirt that is now wrinkled from his grip, and moves to cover his own face trying to hide his now tear stained cheeks, not really sure when he started crying.

“Will there’s nothing to be sorry about, you haven’t done anything wrong. You had a panic attack, they are to be expected right now and your reaction is totally normal.” Hannibal moves to pull Will’s hands down and away from his face, pulling a tissue from the nightstand to wipe away the tears that had pooled there.

“Everything is too hard…” Will’s teeth bit down harshly into the chapped skin of his lips in an attempt to stop the slew of involuntary convulsive whimpers, but it did little to silence them as more sobs wracked his chest.

“I know everything is hard for you right now Will, but you have already come so far, and you should be proud of yourself, just like I am proud of you.”

“I can’t do this… I’m not strong enough.” Hannibal could only think to continue smoothing his fingers through sweat soaked locks while he continued to reassure Will that everything was ok. Hannibal knows that it isn’t, not for Will, not right now, but in time it will be, he just has to get the young agent through these early stages of grief. Taking out the small bottle of sleeping pill’s Hannibal held one out and was relieved when Will opened his mouth and swallowed it down with no hesitation, he just needs some rest the man concedes.

“People like you can grow strong enough to whisper at the iron bars that hold them encased in their nightmares and see them bend out of their way Will, that's what strength can do, fix souls, fix our brains cruel words, but it's hard when you've been fighting for so long. You eventually stop calling out for the help that you so desperately need because it feels like every call goes unanswered, so you find alternate measures of coping, just like you were you were doing before I brought you here, but I have answered your call Will. You can wear a mask of coping and normality by pretending that the bars are not there, but that does nothing but prevent you from finding the peace you need. There is another escape route Will, the one I have given you, it is one into great pain, but through that pain is the ability to slip through the bars, and no longer will you be bound by what tortures your soul… your mind.”

For the first time since arriving here Will meets Hannibal’s gaze without a look of anger or hatred, there is no attempt or gnawing need to look away, instead it’s comforting. Hannibal’s eyes are so different in moments like these, softer than Will knew they could be, the professional man is gone and all that remains is the eyes of one who cares so deeply. If it were anyone else he would drop his gaze, but with Hannibal he’s drawn in closer, always had

been... if he were honest maybe he is glad he can still feel that, feel something other than rage towards the man. Will listens as Hannibal speaks in a soothing tone, uttering words of comfort that Will really needed to hear, he just nods, knowing it is probably the medication forcing those feelings, but in all the world there isn't another like him.

Hannibal smiles when Will's breathing becomes softer, the distressed look melting into a soft gaze. Eye contact isn't something he ever expected from Will, not for this long anyway, there wasn't even an attempt to look away and that was a momentous moment for both of them. Will's body squirms just a little as his muscles relax and he sinks further into the bed, but still there is no attempt to look away. There is something about that gaze of his that Hannibal will never find in another person, and in that moment it's as though their souls have repaired one of the many broken bridges.

Will knew Hannibal was right, that was his way out, he has to walk down that road of fear no matter how painful, what follows will be an endless emotional marathon on bleeding knees, but the outcome is worth it. For so long he had learned how to hide the pain, how to look normal whilst fighting his internal pain and hatred, it leads Will to understanding why some people go so cold inside, it's a defensive mechanism to escape the pain of isolation, why they let their empathy wither and die? Why allow numbness over feeling? Mental anaesthesia, that's why. The thing is though, regardless of the pain, Will believes that living with an incomplete soul is a form of death, a death he doesn't want anymore.

"Everything is going to be okay Will, we will get through this together, I promise that you are not always going to feel this way, things will get easier. But for now, I want you to get some sleep and you will feel much better in the morning… I will be right downstairs if you need me that's why you have the pager." Hannibal leaned down to lift Tera as she bounded over to playfully tug at his pant leg before handing her to Will, inwardly he cursed at the slobber left behind but the action earned him a small smile as the little creature snuggled up beside the distressed agent so it was worth it. When he leaned down again to press a small kiss Will's temple he was surprised when the young agent hooked an arm around his neck and pulled him close for a hug to which Hannibal happily obliged.

"Will you stay with me until I fall asleep?" It was almost a whisper and Will still didn't release the man who hugged him back softly.

"Of course I will." Sitting back up Hannibal pulled the sheet further up and maintained his action of stroking Will's face lightly, it was only minutes until the effects of the sleeping pill became present in Will's face and Hannibal couldn't help but smile as the young agents' eyes fluttered closed peacefully.

Will tried to keep his eyes open, he really did. Sleeping for him meant nightmares so it was never a state of mind he enjoyed approaching. But it was so hard, he was so comfortable. Soon though that was all he was aware of, the soft mattress beneath him, the warmth of the sheets around him, and the soft touch of Hannibal's hand against his cheek stroking so gently and just like that, his eyes began to drift closed. Blissfully unaware of his surroundings as the pill finally took a hold, Will's head has become foggy, and it's as though every eye lash weighs more than it should and gravity has been turned up tenfold.

In that moment Hannibal watches as Will descends into sleep, his brain checking out as he slid into instant REM, his head lolled comfortably into the soft pillow beneath him, his eyelids finally slipping closed and Hannibal smiled as the rest of Will's body followed suit and finally went limp and he could see him sleep. Without the complex workings of his conscious mind Will looked so vulnerable and childlike, his breaths were even and calming, the expression on his face no longer stressed but relaxed.

Offering up one more stroke of Will's face Hannibal leaned to turn out the lamp and stood to leave the room, taking one last look at the sleeping form and the puppy now curled comfortably into his side and closed the bedroom door.

It didn't feel as though he had slept long when Will woke as though he'd been hooked up to the mains, no sleepiness, no slow warm up or stretch, just a distorted consciousness. Within seconds his eyes snap open wide, dreams and memories not just forgotten but completely erased from his mind's eye. As he rouses Will is first aware of the coolness in the air and its loamy fragrance, the ground is fresh tonight… what his body lays upon is the second thing that registers, it's hard and lumpy as if he were on a bed of asphalt… he was.

Will stills in the cool air as he looks up at the darkened view, the stars are non-existent tonight even when the clouds that appear so dense break away from the canvass, they are no longer white or a paler gray, instead they are blackened shadows that shift rapidly with the howling wind. There are times they move just enough to reveal the full moon, but for the most part, this night will be without the benefit of its silvery light.

Will's clothes feel damp against his skin that is drenched in the usual routine of the night's perspiration. Sitting up was confusing but not painful and aside from his own intake of breath, there is nothing to be heard but the rustle of the trees either side of the long empty road. It is simply too dark to see much at all, the black trunks just blend against an even darker backdrop pushing Will's imagination to supply the horrors nestled between the voids.

Why was he outside? Why was he laid in the middle of the road?

After a minute or two seated on the cold asphalt the sound of running water begins to permeate the silence, he is near a brook. A brook would hide his scent, cover his tracks. Will wants to run, from what he isn't sure, but he knows that someone is coming… they're going to take him back, but he isn't sure to where. With a push of unsteady hands Will climbs to stand on faltering steps, the long dark road is the same both in front and behind him, but they are coming so he has to move, he has to pick a direction.

Suddenly, the silence surrendered to the haunting scream of footsteps, the drawn out even steps approach from behind and continue to lurk closer, Will is hyperventilating, trying to avoid making a sound. Each second seems to play on forever as he stands perfectly still listening to the footsteps of his likely murderer, Will didn't turn when he heard the steps stop directly behind him, he knew that sound, he knew that huffing breath and the hooves that echoed with each step against the concrete. Only his peripheral vision caught site of the black stag as it slowly walked by, turning slightly to look at Will before it continued its slow walk as though offering up a silent invitation to follow.

The sky became impossibly darker, low with ominous black clouds when the wind picked up, but Will felt nothing, his bare feet didn't ache as they stepped on the stony asphalt, neither did his skin feel cold against the evenings crisp air when he was only covered by a t-shirt and shorts. The first crack of lightening rent the air and within seconds the rolling boom of the thunder reverberated overhead so loud that it pulled Will's gaze to the skies before the snort of breath in front of him stole back his focus. The stag that stands inches away from him glances back with such darkened eyes before it turned and started its slow walk down the seemingly never ending road.

Upon the animal's first footstep the rain began to fall, slow to start, splattering against the ground haphazardly without ever touching an inch of Will's flesh. With nowhere left to turn he began to walk, following behind the stag felt as though he were being led to safety, the dread has now passed but the confusion remains. With each step Will's feet tremble, his legs twitched, fighting the impulse to whirl around and sprint down that damp, shadowed road but somehow that way felt worse. Slowly, Will's brain ordered his body to pick up his feet in an unbalanced gait, carelessly dropping the lead weights to the ground with each harrowing step.

Time seems to blur as they walk, but the only thing to do is keep moving. Will is walking unusually slow, almost robotically, as if his brain were struggling to tell each foot to take the next step like he were in a stupor of hypnosis… but still he trudged along the road at a sedate pace, his mind focused on nothing but the gentle footsteps that seemed to echo throughout the desolate space.

Will isn't sure how long he's being walking, he knows it has been a while but he doesn't feel tired, with every step taken he seemed to have moved nowhere, the outline of trees remained the same, there was still no end of the road in sight, it was calm. Will would stop, start, take a short run to see if that got him anywhere, but it did not, it was only when a gust of dry wind swept by it finally began to change, the forced air seems to collapse away the canopy of trees, breaking away to be replaced with a new row of decaying houses where windows have long shattered in the weakness of their structures and the rotting wood screams out as if it were in pain… all except for one house, the house positioned at the end of the seemingly never ending road.

Will began to stall, not wanting to venture closer to the unknown structure all while knowing this is where he had been headed. Every time Will stopped his entranced walk the stag would also, unwilling to go further without the lost soul, he was the keeper. For every noise Will's ears become sharper and his mind paranoid, every snap of a twig is a predator, they are coming to take him back. For each sound Will's brain jumps to the most fearsome thing it could be and going back was that threat, his body prepares for flight, fright or freeze.

For the most part he just freezes, running will give away his position…

Now towering in front of Will stood an exquisite house that sent out an instant negative vibe that engulfed any remaining calm, it wasn't decayed or desolate like the others it was immaculate but still Will could feel evil oozing from every crack and crevice of the dismal stone walls. Demonic gargoyle statues hung so high up on the walls they seemed to reach the dark sky, they just added to the frightening atmosphere. The moaning and creaking noises

being projected from the house somehow seemed the creepiest thing though, finally Will forced himself to move, following the stag up the porch steps.

Every fibre of Will's being told him to run, but there was nowhere to go.

The overgrown branches covered the door as if warning him off but as the stag approached the large wooden door creaked open, Will followed, slowly walking further into the place, following the stag that seemed to know the place well, its hooves echoed with each step against the wooden floor that only got dustier with each step.

The inside certainly didn't match exterior.

The old vintage furniture passed was broken, chairs without legs, cabinets without doors, just like a body with no soul that would never work again. The house was huge even by mansion standards as it seemed to take a while to reach the foot of the old fashioned staircase, the sight has Will turning, he wants to run from the house but it's as though everything behind him no longer existed, there's no way back, it's just a sheet of blackness that seemed more terrifying than what was in front of him.

Forcing himself forward Will followed the stag, climbing the less than stable stairs until he was met with another dark hallway, after only seconds the furthest room at the end of the corridor bursts with light, following a soft music, the composition was of an orchestra but the tones eluded him. With an ashen face he forced his body forward… Will knows wherever the stag is leading him, whatever he needs to see is in that room, what else can he do other than follow? There's nowhere to run, there's way to escape… there's nobody coming to help.

It's time to face the fear…

Once more the stags gruff urged Will forward, forcing himself to walk into the next room…

This room is like a perfect magazine cover, but one consisting of only black and gray coloring as though Will had walked into a portrait photo. The mahogany chaise longue holds a deep fabric inlaid with a darker silk embroidered at the edges so delicately while the curtains are linen consisting of only two blocked color's that Will can only perceive as dark, the kind that is untouched by hands, and devoid of dust, whilst a cursory look to the right shows him the almost hidden cords that are used to open and close them. There is no television, no bookshelf, no dining table, only two chairs arranged around the bespoke fireplace which is the only thing in color.

The stag walks and curls up beside one of the chairs placed by the fire in a way Will's dogs would when he sat down, at first the chairs were empty, until a shimmer of mist began to emanate from one, it was diffuse and slightly out of focus, like a poorly taken photograph. It wasn't until the door slammed closed behind Will that it congealed into a form, a man with brilliant dark eyes, silver skin and the smile of a predator.

"Hello Will, please sit down."

"Where am I?"

“You are wherever you want to be.”

“Why am I seeing you Hannibal?”

“I don’t know the answer to that, but maybe I can help you figure it out? You saw freedom in me correct?”

“Yes, but why? I saw a freedom…”

“Do you remember what you craved to be free from?”

“I was trapped…”

“Do you remember where you were trapped Will?”

“No… was it from my own mind? I think it was my mind… I wanted to be free.” Where there should be memories there is a blank space, it was chaos inside Will’s head, he doesn’t know where he is and he doesn’t know how he got there?

“Tell me, what is the last thing you remember?”

“I woke up in the middle of the road, I followed the stag… I don’t remember how I got to the road.”

“You are on the precipice Will.”

“The precipice of what?”

“There is nothing I know that you don’t.”

“Am I dead? Is this eternity?”

“Eternity is where you feel happiest Will, do you feel happy?”

“I don’t feel anything.”

“So maybe that means this is not your eternity, what does that mean?”

“I don’t know… why don’t you tell me?”

“There is nothing I know that you don’t Will.”

“You already said that! Why don’t I want to go back? Why am I running?”

“There is nothing I know that you don’t Will.”

“STOP SAYING THAT!!! I came here! I knew to come here why?” Will stands from the chair and begins moving around the room in a rapid pace, his hands press against the wall as he moves, his breathing comes out in gasps when the edges of the already blackened room begin to fade away to nothing and Will falls to his knees in front of Hannibal seated in the chair.

“Your mind is craving freedom Will, it craves freedom from the constant torment, but in order for that to happen you have to fight…” Hannibal’s voice was clear, his tone soft, it helped keep things calm.

“I think I’m done fighting now… I don’t want to leave this place, nothing hurts here… I would rather that than whatever pain is waiting for me, I can’t go back, I won’t.”

“If you can’t remember what you are leaving behind then how do you know, truly know that you do not want to return to it?”

“I don’t remember the details… but I remember the pain.”

“If you stay here there is neither pain nor happiness, you deserve more than that.”

“The pain is worse… it’s inhumane.”

“Maybe everything isn’t as it seems? Giving up now could elude you of something you are searching for so desperately.”

“Freedom… it’s been taken from me… but I can’t remember why.”

“Maybe this isn’t about your freedom being taken from you Will, maybe what you are enduring is to give your freedom back to you?”

“I thought you were my way out… why did I think you were my way out??”

“I never said that I wasn’t.”

“You never said anything Hannibal because you are not real! You are my subconscious! It’s choosing you now for the same reason I saw freedom in you… what am I running from?”

“And why did your subconscious pick me?”

“WHAT AM I RUNNING FROM!?” There is a scream from deep within that forces its way from Will’s mouth, as if his terrified soul had unleashed a demon… all he feels is anger.

“Why did your subconscious pick me?”

“I DON’T KNOW!?”

“Why did your subconscious pick me Will?”

“Because you can help me…” Will isn’t sure why but he reached out his hand for Hannibal’s, but he did, it was as though reaching for him would take away the pain, the fear, the crippling anxiety.

“It’s ok Will… you don’t have to be afraid…” Tears stream down Will’s cheeks and he screams at the very top of his lungs as he squeezed his eyes shut as if the sheer force could change the outcome, balling his hands into fists each time he throws his head back to let out a blood curdling scream in a failed attempt to rid the fear building up inside.

“Please help me Hannibal…” When everything begins to fade away Will roles onto his back, watching as the ceiling breaks away piece by piece to display the bright stars above him, and finally there is nothing but calm.

“You just have to trust me Will… can you do that?”

“I trust you…”

For a change Will didn’t wake with a start, there was only the usual amount of sweat and upon waking, he burrowed himself into the warm, soft sheets as he rubbed the last remainders of sleep from his eyes and gazed out the window at the horizon, its vivid light extended across a rosy sky and he supposes this was something the majority of people would consider beautiful, but he found it strange, hard even, to find something so meaningful in something so every-day.

Shifting again Will looked down at Tera curled into his side, smiling as the puppy snored lightly, each time he sees her Will knows Hannibal’s gift was thoughtful, but as soon as there is a rise of appreciation, a rise in anger thwarts that feeling. Dogs are family, they love us without question and we love them equally, what they give could never be repaid in a hundred lifetimes. Those canines are pure souls, god given, a beauty that deserves cherishing. Will always said the dogs were gods in fur, they kept people sane in challenging times and he guesses that’s why Hannibal bestowed her as a gift to him, but appreciating that means he has to let go of his anger towards the man, and Will isn’t sure he can quite manage that just yet.

As Will lays and watches the sleeping pup his mind ventures to the previous evening and the night’s dream, it was so clear and vivid. Any dream or nightmare was always dissected in detail during Will’s morning routine and last nights was no different, interpretation can take on many forms but this one seemed abundantly clear. Will had been walking a dark road, scared and alone in a confusing realm as though searching for help, and he found it… that help was seemingly Hannibal, it was the only part of the dream that didn’t scare him.

Today Will feels relatively calm, but it's under the surface and mixed with some anxiety and he’s not used to the combination, it's truly odd. Calmness takes him up, and anger brings him back down, so in that mix he’s simply focused on the task at hand. Some days he needs Hannibal to keep him on an even keel, he reaches out and accepts his helping hand, but other days Will wants to reach out with violent hands and smash Hannibal into the ground for doing this to him. Perhaps it's like that for everyone starting something new? Forced any way, pleasure at gaining forward momentum and fear of the change.

It's hard work, this entire existence is, but maybe it would be worth it in the end? Will has to believe that is true, it’s his only grounding thought. Only the brave become vulnerable emotionally, for trust takes strength, lowering your shield is brave, and often it comes when a person learns that to survive and be strong, this vulnerable state is the first step. Not one human alive can step out of their own cage until they are willing to unlock the door, emotional vulnerability takes strength to allow in, yet it is the route to true health.

Will’s deep thought is only interrupted by the smell of food and a light knock on the door. “Breakfast Will.”

“I’m coming.” Will climbed from the bed to dress and questioned when he had stopped dreading mealtimes, yes he was still cautious about what he ate but he trusted Hannibal’s explanation for each food, didn’t he? Either way he walked into the other room without argument.

“Good morning Will, how did you sleep?”

“I slept well thank you… I had a strange dream, but it wasn’t the worst I’ve ever had.”

“Would you like to talk about it?” Will gave a swift shake of the head but no vocal answer, he wouldn’t even know where to begin explaining that dream.

“Ok, sit down and eat your breakfast please.” The moment Will slides into the chair he’s served quite a large platter of food. Eggs, what looked to be ham, a tureen of fruit that sits beside the plate in a bowl of ice to keep it chilled and Will can’t deny that it looked amazing. Even the basket of toasted rolls set beside an elegant glass of orange juice looks divine and it still puzzles Will how Hannibal can make the simplest of meals look so good.

“Thank you.”

“You are very welcome Will.” Will picks up the fork as soon as Hannibal sits with his own meal, and it’s a relief to the man that the meal wars had seemingly ended alongside the usual stand of silence. The fact that Will had started engaging in conversation made things a lot easier, he didn’t chew the man’s ear off, and it wasn’t often, but Hannibal knew that was normal for Will, he wasn’t exactly the chatty type even before bringing him here. “I have to go to the store later, is there anything that you would like for me to get you?”

“No thank you.”

“Ok, well let me know if you change your mind. In the meantime I would like to discuss something I had planned for today.” At the mention of something planned Will’s stomach tensed before relaxing, he isn’t sure if he can quite handle another room today but doesn’t let the worry spread to his face. “I would like to think that we are now in a place that we can resume your therapy Will, we can begin to sort through the thoughts and feelings that are causing these internal feelings of stress and fear.” Will’s mind flashed back to feelings of helplessness as he clung onto Hannibal after bursting out of them rooms, and then to the dream seemingly urging him to accept the man’s help.

“How would you feel about that?”

“Just therapy? No more rooms today?”

“No Will, just therapy.”

“Ok…”

“Good, eat your breakfast.” Will offers up a slight nod and eats more than his usual picky amounts, there’s a silence as they eat but it isn’t coupled with the usual awkward silence which just makes everything that little bit more comfortable. Once finished Hannibal allowed

Will to shower and change as he cleared away the breakfast items but saw the anxiety spread across his face when he returned to the room.

“It’s ok Will, there is nothing to be nervous about, I promise we are just going to talk ok?” Sliding back the third bookshelf in the room revealed another hidden door and Will couldn’t help but huff out a small laugh.

“You really thought this through huh?”

“Planning and anticipation is everything in a situation like this Will.”

Walking into the therapy room was so much different from his visits to Hannibal’s office for his first appointments, the room is much smaller and plainer, only consisting of a chair facing a slanted couch and a small table that seemed to hold a golden teapot with a single cup. Will was much more accustom to sitting opposite Hannibal rather than laying, and something about the situation made it a little more intense. Will took a few moments standing in the doorway, looking over the aspects of the room and he is only pulled from his focus when Hannibal’s hand rest upon his shoulder.

“This room will only be used for our talking therapy, there is nothing for you to feel nervous about. I would like for you to lay on the couch for me please Will ok?” Will offered up a small nod before moving into the requested position, the couch is slightly slanted giving off the effect of sitting up against the pillows in a bed, it’s comfortable, but sitting on the couch in a small, stuffy room feels a little surreal to what he is used to. Well, he thinks he is anyway, everything kind of feels like Will is dreaming, it’s a scary feeling and he doesn’t like it, if it is real, then he wants to leave, because what comes next is confronting feelings he is trying to run from, and if he is dreaming, then wants to wake up… but he doesn’t.

Will sits as much as he can on the slanted furniture, but pulls his knees up slightly for good measure as he watches Hannibal move to the small table pouring the contents of the tea pot into the cup placed beside it, it’s much smaller than normal but the contents smell sweet so it was probably an appropriate size. Sitting beside Will on the couch Hannibal offers up the cup and is relieved when Will takes it without much persuasion. “I would like for you to drink this before we begin Will.”

“What is it?”

“It is raspberry and chai tea, mixed with a low dosage of psychedelic compounds… it will help you to relax your mind and body, meaning certain topics will be easier for us to discuss.” Hannibal noticed instantly that Will took the cup without any further persuasion and as small as the action was, it was still a huge step on this journey they are taking together.

“You want me to take drugs? So I don’t have control over what I say?” Will looks down at the swirl of liquid, he doesn’t want to lose cognitive function and recognition of what he was saying.

“That is the opposite of what I want Will, It is known as Psilocybin therapy, in 1943 Albert Hoffman discovered the psychoactive properties of LSD held psychotherapeutic uses to alter the negative fundamental personality structures that are usually present with autism, there is

substantial evidence indicating that psilocybin with psychological support may be effective for ameliorating treatment resistant depression, and is effective in treating mood and anxiety disorders without impacting working memory, or social interaction… it refers to the belief that the therapy can dissolve conflicts in the mind."

"So it alters you mentally?"

"Yes and no, the psychedelic drugs are only useful for exploring the subconscious mind because a sliver of conscious mind remains active during the experience, patients remain intellectually alert throughout the entire process and remember their experiences vividly afterward. It is just in this highly introspective state, a patients reluctance to speak truly about their true feelings is inebriated, but they are still actively aware of ego defences such as projection, denial, and displacement, but the effects are not permanent. The ultimate goal of the therapy Will is to provide a safe, mutually compassionate context through which the profound and intense reliving of memories can be filtered through the principles of genuine psychotherapy. Aided by the deeply introspective state attained by the patient, the therapist assists in developing a new life framework or personal philosophy that recognizes individual responsibility for change… to put it simply you will be able to talk about things with ease, especially things that are bothering your subconscious, things that you may not even be consciously aware of."

"Is it safe?"

"In the wrong hands no, in mine, yes… you have to trust me Will, that is the only way this can work." Will made brief eye contact and only hesitated for a moment before bringing the cup to his mouth, drinking the contents down in one. Upon handing it back to Hannibal Will silently questioned why he barely hesitated, it didn't feel as forced as things usually do, but he was still angry, angry at everything. Hannibal had stolen his freedom and subjected him to his worst nightmares all in the pursuit of 'saving him' and it hurt, more so than anything because he trusted Hannibal. Will trusted him more than he had every trusted anyone… as difficult as it was to put into words a bond was there, and Hannibal betrayed that bond.

Will now spent every day of his life living in fear, he was scared, and the only person he wanted when those fears came to drown him was Hannibal.

It was a confusing concept…

So Will's only explanation and reasoning for his lack of hesitation was founded in the fact that yes, he does trust Hannibal.

"Ok, you will start to feel a little lightheaded and dizzy but that will pass quickly. Once that happens you will feel extremely relaxed and may experience some sights of color and euphoria, just focus on our conversation and breathe ok?" Bringing a soft hand to Will's cheek Hannibal tilted his head slightly, already seeing the effects show in Will's eyes, only when he received the nod did he aid Will in getting comfortable before moving to the chair opposite.

Hannibal allowed a few moments of silence for the psychedelics to fully take a hold before speaking again. "Ok Will, I want you to focus on my voice… try and keep your breathing

even, and focus on my questions… do you remember how you got here?" Will didn't answer… instead he stretched his hand out in front of his eyes and watched as his fingers splayed out and left imprints in the air around them, color's just seemed to leak and swirl in the air as he moved them, his hand felt heavy, unable to move much more than his arm, he had the feeling that lifting it would be a chore so just kept it in front of his face. Will's mind seemed to be floating through some kind of syrup, going too slow for him to use it, too slow to register fear or even worry about his situation… a voice came again, it ebbed and echoed but it sounded familiar, calming almost.

"Will, do you remember how you got here?" Hannibal was sure to keep his voice low, patient in his questioning, always maintaining an air of calm in the room that he wanted Will to mirror, a feeling of relaxation.

"Yes… you brought me here…" Will replies, he thinks that is the right answer, Hannibal had brought him here… or was it the FBI? They said it was important to them that he come and talk to this doctor, so he had come.

"Very good Will, and do you know why you're here?"

"Yes… no… Jack sent me here." Will figures that Jack has finally gotten sick of his crazy behavior and wants to know what's wrong with him. To be fair, Will wants to know what's wrong with himself too… wait? No, that was the reason, HE wanted to know what was wrong with himself. "No, I brought me here?" The why of his predicament was pretty easy to judge. Wasn't it? It was familiar, the situation, not the specifics. Maybe some of the specifics. He'd been here before, well not here, but he knew, didn't he?

"I think you are a little confused Will but that is ok, that is why we are here ok? We are going to sort through some of that confusion, so you just need to focus on that reason for now, not who sent you, can you do that for me?"

"Yes… I needed help… I need… help." Will shifted slightly, pushing himself further down the couch into a more comfortable laying position, flashes of ecstasy from the simple movement fired like lightning throughout every nerve ending and Will shifted again, to replicate the feeling and a moan of pleasure involuntarily escaped, there was no move to stop it or hide it, instead he took a deep breath in to enjoy it. There was an aftershock he was experiencing, his mind lighting up along with his nerves in bursts of pure physical and mental euphoria… it felt pleasurable.

"Yes Will, you need some help and that is why we are here, how do you feel right now?" Hannibal noticed that gravity seemed to win as Will's arm dropped back down, elbow bumping unceremoniously against the softness of the couch. The therapy isn't an exact science but it can usually take a few minutes for a person to become coherent enough for conversation, there was also a fifty, fifty risk as to how a person reacts, there can be intense euphoria or an overwhelming feeling of panic and terror, but judging by Will's actions and the occasional groan of pleasure, he had the happy side effect.

"I feel really good…" Slowly letting his head roll to the side Will took in the room around him, his glasses were skewed on his face and had something multi-colored smeared across the lenses. What was that? Things were blurry, but shiny, shapes were moving as his eyes

drifted in and out of focus as what feels like an eternity slipped by melting with the passage of slowed time. Will's focus is only pulled when someone slaps both hands down aggressively on the back of the couch, looking up the young agent's eyes go wide as he looks up at a smiling Garett Jacob Hobbs.

"He's just going to make up lies about you Will… he isn't going to help you! He will manipulate your mind like he always does! Always has haha! You are even accepting your own confinement… you are pathetic! You should get out of here right now before he starts lying to you about who you are." The strong voice is angry today, Will has heard Garrett speak to him many times before by this point but never that angrily… and truthfully?

"No… no he won't.. he won't." Will's face abandons its calm demeanor and surrenders to one of panic, it's a state of mind that Hannibal stops before it continues. There are two paths to this therapy that people often refer to as 'trips' one good, one bad, and when the mind chooses which it wants to follow, there is no coming back.

"Will, look at me ok? It's just you and me in this room, nobody else. We are going to have a talk about how you have been feeling and find a way to make it better." With Hannibal's revelation, Will's mind returned to a calmed state, he blinked a few times and Garrett disappeared, instead he was replaced once more by the swirling color's. When the panic begins to descend Will's arm begins to stroke at his own chest. The cloth was damp? It was at least cool, but warm, like sweat and body heat. And it was soft, pleasant to touch, he hummed as he ran his hand up and down the fabric, enjoying the feeling of his shirt, his eyes fluttering closed, causing him to lose sight of the ceiling above him. Losing himself into the feeling.

"I am going to ask you some questions now Will, and I need you to answer them honestly for me ok?" Hannibal has a pen poised over a paper pad, he tries not to lose focus when Will continues to run his hands over the expanse of his own writhing body and groans in pleasure as he does.

"Yes Hannibal…" Traveling further down, Will fingertips brush the buttons of the flannel shirt as his eyes fell closed over and over. One, two, nothing but a bit of frayed string, three, the hemmed edge of his shirt. Warmth and cool hit simultaneously sending shivers through his body. The tingles creating a cascade triggering a wave of blue and green. Seeking more of those fireworks his hands pushed up the shirt and meandered across his skin, pushing softly into his own flesh finding areas that sang out.

"Do you hear or see things that other people can't? Or that you think might not be real?"

"Yes… sometimes, but sometimes I'm not sure if anything is real." Clarity seemed to be lost to the haze of pleasure as Will's hands slowly slipped to a rough and stiff barrier that somewhat prevented him from chasing that adventure. Distracted for a bit by the new textures and the new sensation of running his finger along the edge of his jeans Will squirmed a little in frustration, his hands moving to rest firmly on his crotch causing his squirm to evolve into an arch.

The action has Hannibal involuntarily shifting in his seat, this is a common reaction, but that was not motive for this type of therapy. Usually it stops when the patient begins to become more in tune with their surroundings, its just the initial impact that can be quite powerful.

“Do you see or hear these things when you are awake Will?”

“Yes…” Will’s mind seemed to pull back from the fog slightly when he palmed a familiar lump under his jeans. While his mind was slowly returning, he realised his own voice was foreign to him and surprisingly loud. Not only did his throat feel like he had eaten flour but it sounded like it too. Rough and dry, clinging to itself as he moaned loudly at the rush of endorphins, his voice cracking.

“Do the voices tell you to do things Will?”

“No… they tell me things about myself, things that I don’t like.” Hannibal was more than relieved when Will’s hands travelled away from his groin up to his hair, twisting and twirling the tousled locks instead, as his focus seemed to return to a more stable state.

“What do they tell you Will?”

“The strong voice usually tells me that I am weak… broken, it thinks that I should punish myself, and the weak voice is usually on my side, that one doesn’t win very often though. It’s worst when they gang up on me though, and talk about me like I’m not there.” This question was perhaps the most important of all to Hannibal, he needed to know exactly what Will hated about himself both pre and post kidnap, if the same thoughts were present post, then the elctro-shock therapy hadn’t been as successful as Hannibal had hoped.

“I know you had those thoughts before coming here Will, but have you had those thoughts since?”

“Do you mean since you strapped me to a chair and electrocuted my brain?” Will smiled at his own comment, grinning over at Hannibal as he shifted slightly, wanting more of that feeling that erupts with every movement. Hannibal supposes that Will’s description of the electro-shock therapy may not be the most professional way of putting it, but it was a true description, so he just accepted Will’s backward insult.

“Yes.”

“No, it’s easier to ignore the thoughts now… because I feel sick when I think about them.”

“That is a good thing Will, it means that your brain is re-training itself to consider those thoughts unhealthy and unjust, did you believe that you were all the negative things your mind tries to tell you that you are?” Will's fingertips travel from his hair back down beneath his shirt and the touch is electric, wherever they touch his skin tingles in a frenzy of static, as his hands move further over his skin Will’s body has a transitory paralysis, his mind barely able to process the pleasure so fast. In that moment every nerve in his body and brain is electrified, sending him into a heady trance that he doesn’t want to leave… its pure euphoria.

“No it means you re-trained my brain… I did think they were true… I don’t think I do anymore.” Hannibal can see Will struggling to maintain cohesive cognitive function, and Will knows that he is struggling to keep it, it’s like some sort of outer body experience. Somewhere, deep inside Will knows that his brain is sending signals, telling him what to do, whether or not his body is listening is a different story.

Will glanced over at Hannibal after his response, the corners of his lips fighting a smile, his eyebrows slightly raised before that mischievous look of his spread wide across his face. Hannibal tries to look away, but before he can strengthen his resolve, he has already glanced back, just as Will reached down to the hem of his shirt. There was the sudden sound of a rip as Will pulled apart the fabric of his shirt with a crook of his fingers, each button detached itself and pinged in different directions across the room and following the action, Will's hands were back on the skin of his chest, his fingers trailing the skin as he let out a low growl.

Unable to keep a thought straight in his head at Will's impromptu strip show, Hannibal stood and pulled the pillow from his own chair before approaching the writhing agent, pulling the shirt back together he rests the pillow on Will's chest and guided his hands to the fabric. There was the hope he would abandon his self-molestation in favor of the pillow and luckily for Hannibal, that's exactly what Will did. Sitting back down in the chair he continued his light questioning when Will seemed to focus more on his surroundings rather than the sensations around him.

"It's good that you don't have those thoughts anymore Will, you have also been on the anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication for quite a while now, how are you finding them?"

"They are fine." Finally Hannibal's voice returned to a level he could interpret and Will thinks about his own answer, yes they were fine, but he hadn't really felt much of a difference by this point.

"Do you feel that they are helping you at all?" Will shrugged, still fiddling with the pillow in his hands. He hadn't really seen or felt a difference since starting the medication.

"I don't really feel any different…"

"Sometimes medications can take a few months to really begin helping with your symptoms. If the pills aren't helping going forward we'll discuss adjusting your dosage."

"Adjust? You mean increase it?"

"Some recipients respond very well to a lower dosage, but it's not uncommon to increase it after a month or two if it's not working as well as it should." There were a few seconds of near-silence other than the sound of a pen scratching against paper, clearly Hannibal was taking notes. "Does talking with me make you nervous now Will?" Will slouched down further in the slanted chair, before shaking his head.

"Not nervous no." Will mumbled, fidgeting even more than he had before, the euphoric feeling seemed to instantly dissipate at Hannibal's question. No, he wasn't nervous to talk to Hannibal, he wasn't always distressed by it but he wasn't always happy about it either. Both the response and body language have Hannibal intrigued, clearly Will felt some type of apprehension when it came to speaking with him, but if it wasn't nerves, then what was it?

"Could you tell me what you do feel when we talk Will?" Will looked toward the door at the question, could he just leave now? Could he just get up and walk out instead of offering a response? When his true feelings began to rise he had a strong urge to flee the room and

never come back. This was uncomfortably close to having all of his feelings out in the open, and that prospect made Will feel as though he was about to be laid bare, like he had to escape.

The drugs were making it too difficult to hide anything…

“Angry… I’m angry at you.”

"That's understandable, would you care to elaborate on that feeling?" To Will's surprise, Hannibal put down his pen and paper as though preparing for what was coming next, he saw the shift of emotion on Will’s face, it went from euphoric to anger in a milli second.

“Which part would you like me to elaborate on Hannibal? The part where you kidnapped me? The part where you shoved a feeding tube down my neck? The part where you subject me to rooms I can barely cope with? Or the part where you stuck a needle in my hand and strapped it in place?”

“We can discuss any of them aspects Will, any that you would like to?” The aspects had a dull exhaustion to them, like Will had been over the same bitterness in his mind too many times before, but never with Hannibal, he spat the reasons for his anger out with an uncovered sneer in his voice that extended all the way to his eyes and Hannibal prepared for the upcoming onslaught.

“What’s the point discussing them? It isn’t going to change any of them… what you did was vile and it made it worse because I trusted you.”

“And now?” Will cringed at the question, he was desperate to say the trust had gone and could never be regained, but he knows that is a lie and can’t say it with absolute conviction.

“How about you Hannibal? Do you have anything to say about what you did? Any regrets?”

“No I don’t have any regrets Will, all I want is to help you, and that is what I’m trying to do.”

“You may consider it help Hannibal, I consider it torture! Cruel! And unjust! You took our friendship and threw it away the second you confined me to those rooms.”

“It’s normal to feel that way Will, but those feelings will fade over time.”

“FUCK YOU HANNIBAL! STOP PSCHOANALYSING ME!” The argument was cold. Every word over pronounced, slicing rather than tumbling through the dry air. The friendship and trust hadn't gone for Will, rather it had been distorted into a close mimic of hatred, and as he continues to endure Hannibal’s ‘help’, the wall of bitterness that separated them would remain, growing more thorns every day… but its that state of mind that makes everything so much harder, Will wants to hate him, he wants to believe the friendship has gone but it hasn’t, and its that realisation that angers him.

“Ok, tell me honestly then Will, would you have rather continued living the way you were?”

“WHAT YOU MEAN FREE!? WITHOUT THE HINDERANCE OF A STRAIGHT JACKET?? UNDER THE GUISE OF THIS BULLSHIT THERAPY!?” Hannibal remained

as still as a cadaver and just as pallid, unblinking against Will's onslaught, maybe this was the venting that Will needed? Maybe once everything is out in the open they can finally move past the internal hatred that has been building up inside the agent for so long.

Words began to fly from Will's mouth that he never thought he'd even think, let alone say out loud, but he knew instantly from the look in Hannibal's eyes that they'd hit their mark. The realisation only has Will upping his game, bolting upright Hannibal had already stood bracing for the impact that he knew was coming. And suddenly movement, Will charged at him and swung vigorously at the man who narrowly dodged each punch, instead he worked his hands around Will's torso who used Hannibal for leverage as he lifted his legs from the floor and used them to push hard against the wall sending them both to the ground. Will tried hard to pull himself away from the tight grip around his torso and slammed both elbows backwards into Hannibal's ribs repeatedly when he realised that wasn't going to happen.

Hannibal rest his back against the chair as the knot in Will's stomach threw itself upward into his throat with the force of a catapult, driving out a keening moan which grew in strength, rising into a scream. Hannibal turned slightly, angling Will's legs towards the small table, giving him an outlet for his anger. It was made from flimsy wood put together with glue so the young agent's socked feet wouldn't get hurt, and he continued to kick out hard, breaking the table on first contact.

Will threw all his anger into his legs, kicking at it repeatedly as the wood shattered and split. Still he was screaming as if he didn't need breath, in that wood was every room he had to endure, every action that Hannibal had committed, the table represented his anger towards himself and the Doctor, and he just wanted it obliterating.

When nothing more stood, just a pile of shattered pieces only then did Will stop. Panting through shuddering breaths as Hannibal loosened his grasp, and just like that the crushing weight of everything seemed to lift for the first time. Will didn't attempt to move and nor did Hannibal, they sat in a silence that was only broken by Will's attempts to calm his breathing.

"Feel better?"

"Yes…" Will nodded and allowed the man to help him back over to the couch. For these sweet seconds he didn't have to hide behind a mask, not of happiness, not of coping, he could be honest and clearly have an honest reaction. The meltdown was the release valve they both needed and now the hatred in the air has turned to one of calm, Will finally feels like he can breathe, he feels as though he can take that part of himself that is broken and make it a ghost, a ghost that falls away and becomes nothing and all that remains is strength and the desire to move on.

Crouching down in front of Will Hannibal takes both his hands in his own and smiles when they are not pulled away, "I'd like to discuss some treatments for you during the following few weeks to see if they help."

"I don't want any more medicines."

"I don't mean that kind of treatment Will." Hannibal responded, standing to pull out a notebook of plain, blank paper nestled between the now shards and splinters of wood, then

moved to sit beside Will. “I want you to do some emotional exercises as well. And during this time, I want you to write your feelings down at least once a day."

"You want me to keep a diary?" Will hadn't written in a diary since he was fifteen, the request seemed so childish to do it now.

"Yes, I would like for you to do it when you are feeling anxious or angry, and again when you are feeling calm or happy." Hannibal advised, apparently unperturbed by Will’s reluctance to write a diary. "It's best if you don't have any interruptions so that you can record your feelings more thoroughly, so try your best to do it before or after our mealtimes ok?”

“So you can read it?”

“Absolutely not, the diary is for yourself, believe me Will sometimes it is helpful to look back on old feelings, it sometimes puts things into perspective and gives you a way to vent.”

“Ok…”

“Good, and going forward I am going to leave your pills in the nightstand beside the bed, you know its one of each morning, noon and night, so I am trusting you to take the correct doses at the correct time ok?”

“Ok.”

“Promise me that you will take them correctly?” Hannibal didn’t gain a response just a nod, but he trusted that Will would take them as and when they were needed.

“I feel sleepy…” Will did trust the fact that Hannibal would never attempt to read it, the man was very protective of certain privacies.

“That’s completely normal Will, that is the psychedelics wearing off, I recommend you take a nap now and I will come back after I have been to the store ok?” Will barely responded, just nodded his head slightly as a wave of drowsiness hit, the next thing he feels is Hannibal helping him from the slanted couch to the bed and he doesn’t even register falling asleep.

Will is woken once more to Tera scurrying around his chest, nipping at his t-shirt wanting to play, he swipes an arm out blindly with a smile and gently grabs her, bringing the excited pup to his face, only exciting her further. With a huff Will swings his legs from the bed and lets her run off the excitement in the room before dragging himself into a seated position while yanking open his-the nightstand, and finds the labelled pill bottle and fishes out the two pills he is supposed to take on an afternoon.

For a moment Will considers tossing them down the sink but his mind reverts back to the promise he made Hannibal, the Doctor had entrusted him with taking the correct dose at the correct times and for some reason going back on that promise made him feel guilty. In a way that would be breaching Hannibal’s trust, and for whatever reason he doesn’t want to do that, plus if the man gives him another blood test he would be screwed, so tilting back his head he drops both pills to the back of his mouth, chasing it with water and swallowing.

Picking up Tera and the small rope dog toy, Will lays back down on his side and smiles when Tera begins the game of tug and war. There have been a lot of emotional changes over the last few days, but Will doesn't feel as overwhelmed with them, he still hears the negative voices and craves his freedom, he even sees things that probably aren't there once in a while. But all in all, it isn't too bad, but it's not that much better either, he guesses these things don't happen overnight… the road to healing is long.

Hannibal had said that it would take weeks, even months for the drugs to really kick in and help. But that also had to be coupled with therapy and a trusting mind set, it doesn't help the voices taunt him about it… they constantly mock and play with his mind, 'It's not going to work… there's no way you're going to get rid of us' but the voices are getting quieter and easier to deal with.

Especially right now, after his rant at Hannibal, his complete unleashing of his anger and feelings, Will just feels… calm? Relaxed? He isn't sure but he likes the feeling.

Will spends the next few hours playing with Tera, whether or not he will admit how grateful he is to have her he is, she helps to pass the time and brings many moments of joy to his distressed mind. She keeps him occupied and even curls up to listen or comfort when Will is sobbing or in need of a way to vent. Hannibal was true to his word and returned after his visit to the store, the evenings meal is again eaten in relative silence but when the man moves to clean up and remove the trolley from the room Will begins to feel a little panicky, almost as though he doesn't want Hannibal to leave.

The prospect of spending another evening alone wasn't as appealing as it usually was but he can't quite bring himself to ask the man to stay, he needs a conduit, a way to ask without asking and that comes under the guise of Hannibal opening the drawer at the base of the bookcase.

"You have monopoly?" Will had never really paid much attention to the bookcases and hadn't even noticed the drawer Hannibal pulled open, but he did recognise the game, he remembers playing it when he was younger, he doesn't remember his opponents face, but he remembers enjoying it.

"It's been that bookcase for years, some of my younger patients enjoyed playing it when I did a year's residency at a child psychiatric unit."

"Do you want play?" Will was beginning to go a little stir crazy stuck in these three rooms alone so was glad of the opportunity offered, he usually prefers being outdoors but he guesses the game is better than nothing.

"Ok, I suppose I could spend an hour or so kicking your butt." Hannibal always hated playing board games, but Misha always insisted on a game night once a week and with this very game, and what he wouldn't give for one more game with her. Plus, this was the first time Will had suggested or allowed an activity together, so there was no way he was turning that down.

Hannibal handed Will the game to set up which he did on the table whilst Hannibal took the serving trolley from the room, Will was quite surprised at the fact Hannibal returned with a

bottle of wine and two glasses, the man hadn't permitted him to drink anything since bringing him here so silently questions why now. Still he didn't refuse the glass that was filled more than halfway and handed to him.

Hannibal remembered quickly how frustrating this game was when Will started winning nearly instantly, and as the game went on his luck just increased. So maybe there was a lack of morals that made a slight appearance, one that Will's eagle eye clearly did not miss.

"Hannibal, you can't just take hotels from the bank without paying for them."

"Why not?"

"Because you can't! That's not how the game works." Will reached for the dice and tossed them onto the board huffing out a small laugh at the man's brazen attempt to cheat.

"Bad luck, Hannibal," Will smirked as he moved the little hat forward four spaces. "Euston road with two hotels. That'll be two thousand dollars please." Will didn't think he could sound any smugger if he tried…

So much for Hannibal kicking his ass.

Will laughed a little louder when Hannibal looked down at his meagre funds. The laughter was music to Hannibal's ears as it rolled about the room like a sweetness in the air, vibrant and heart-warming. It came in fits and bursts, loud to soft, to nothing at all and then back to loud again as if there were an invisible feather tickling at the young agent's nape.

"Erm… all I have is Leicester Square, and around five hundred dollars." The man looked up and saw the gleam of victory in Will's eyes. "Fine you win!"

"Good game." Will mused.

"Nobody likes a sore Winner Will, how are you feeling?"

"And nobody likes a sore loser Hannibal! I feel a little hazy, but relaxed."

"Well you haven't had any alcohol for a while, that is to be expected." Will simply smiled before looking back down at the now empty glass.

"I'm gonna go to bed if you don't mind?"

"No of course not, I will see you in the morning." Just before Will walked through the door he turned slightly.

"Goodnight Hannibal."

"Goodnight Will."

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Is Will finally reaching a place of acceptance with his new situation or is this the calm before the storm? Will offers something up when he thinks he is in the grasps of a dream and Hannibal allows something that really could go either way… will the butterfly effect of that situation cause severe consequences for Will?

There is no room in this chapter just both fluff and angst… however the next chapter will have Will visiting his worst scenario yet!

A huge HUGE thank you to everyone that is still following and enjoying this story, especially to those who have taken the time to leave a kudo, a comment and a bookmark! The support for my story has been amazing and I appreciate it so much especially as I took quite a long break after developing writers block with this one!

As always please let me know your thoughts or suggestions I am always happy to hear them and I hope you enjoy the latest chapter and the story going forward…

Will awoke to the soft sheets and inhaled, the morning light trickled in through the blinds but didn't quite penetrate the fabric shielding his eyes, Will enjoyed the moment before shedding himself of the already distant dream and soaked in the warmth before shifting upwards on the pillow slightly letting his eyes see the sun's rays, closing them again when it was still a little too bright. Slowly and reluctantly, Will sits up and pushes the offending blankets away, looking around the room he squinted against the sun before smiling down at Tera still snuggled up beside the pillow lightly snoring away.

Wearing only a T-shirt and some underwear Will walked to the closet in his…. the, room and grabbed some fresh clothes for the day before walking to the bathroom to take a shower. There doesn't appear to be the overwhelming sense of sadness today, he isn't sure where it's gone or why but it's as though an enormous weight had been lifted. Ultimately he's glad of it, as the only part of feeling well is exiting the emotional storm and maybe he has? Will has days like this though, days where he feels calm, like the anger has gone and he can move on from it, but then the slightest thing shows and reaches up to pull him right back down, down to that place where he is nothing but rage incarnate.

It helps that there are outlets here, Will never thought he would see those as positives, but he does. In real life there were no outlets for his mental anguish and it sent him into a very dark place, there was no anchor to relief. But now he has one, many actually. Yes, most are under the guise of psychological torture, but not all of them… and being able to enter in to that place of darkness by choice is an entirely different feeling, it was like his breakdown and

recovery period was planned, scheduled, he guesses they are, but maybe that isn't as bad as Will once thought.

Will prefers having his own inner peace, allowing his inner world to become a place of tranquillity and he has the tools to do that now, Hannibal was giving them to him slowly and what followed was this feeling of a neurotic elixir. Wellness came when he knows that someday there will be an exit of this house, hope came when there was a possibly that exit would come with a healthy psyche, but turmoil came when the walls reminded him of his entrapment. It was like an unwalkable carousel of mixed emotions, wanting to cling onto the good to escape the bad, but he just can't quite escape the repertoires of the situation.

Will lets the water run down his body, the soothing feel of warm water is interrupted with the gnawing thoughts, they take away the progress that has been made so far, and they take away the fondness of the previous night but it just has Will pressing the palms of his hands against his ears trying to block out the screams of bad thoughts, but it doesn't work. They only grow louder and louder, he just wants them to go away now. Is that so much to ask? Just when Will thinks all hope is lost he hears Hannibal's voice calling his name, not physically, but inside his mind and it is like a ray of light in the darkness of what's happening, it guides Will back to reality just like it used to before arriving here.

When talking to Hannibal the auditory torture dies down, he is Will's anchor, he gives hope when the darkness creeps in and although relaxing, that thought is as terrifying as it is calming. Wasn't he supposed to be fighting that? Fighting the control over his mind? Will isn't sure he wants to anymore, he likes it better in the grasp of calm.

Walking back into the bedroom to dress brings a smile to his face, Tera bounds around the bed before diving off to tug at the towel draped around Will's hips only becoming more excited when he reaches down to ruffle her fur. "Good morning sweet girl, did you have a nice sleep?" Will huffs out a laugh at the small bark she offers up, he will always be grateful for Hannibal's gift even if he hasn't vocalized that just yet, she has been his companion in the quiet moments of despair, bringing those blossoming's of hilarity that dogs bring. Tera has the cutest little look about her when she's puzzled, or excited or serious, all those emotions that are so similar to Will's own, she is his hot-water bottle in the middle of the night and the welcome wagon when he wakes or returns to the room, already she's Will's best friend.

Will knows that Hannibal would be up with breakfast soon and usually requests that he leave Tera in the bedroom whilst they eat, but they had a few minutes so he let the puppy follow him through to the main room. Will's was well aware of the man's cleanliness and also knows it must drive him crazy to have a dog in the house, but still Hannibal had ignored a very powerful dislike for the comfort and happiness of him, and no matter how much Will ignored the feeling, it meant a lot to him.

Will's eyes zone in on the coffee table used to host their previous nights monopoly game to see it now covered with the lure supplies that Hannibal had brought to him weeks ago, the equipment that he had refused to touch so it was packed away in a drawer, but clearly Hannibal thinks Will is now at a stage where he would interact with them and show interest. Forgetting that sight for a moment though Will's gaze shifts to another, specifically the thick plaid coat draped over the back of the couch, for a moment he's confused when he picks it up

to inspect it… was that supposed to be a joke? Or a cruel reminder of a garment that he currently has no use for?

Will tossed it back down and the anger comes in waves, did Hannibal really set out to mock him? Throwing the coat back down Will attempts a few deep breaths, attempting to stem his anger and instead allow his mind to conjure up reasons as opposed to assumptions, but none were offered. Without really thinking about the action Will turns and kicks the chair at the small dinner table hard, when little damage is done he grasps the wood and slams it against the wall, shattering it into flimsy shards.

When Tera yelps and runs away from him Will is filled with instant guilt, knowing that he has just scared the shit out of the pup he turns to follow her and is left face to face with Hannibal standing in the doorway who had already picked the shaking animal up. “Good morning Will.” Will’s stomach twisted in knots when he saw the man’s gaze travel from him to the splintered wood now covering the floor.

“Morning…” Will froze slightly when Hannibal walked further into the room, awkwardly fiddling with the sleeves of his sweater and waited for the man to speak. Reaching out the Doctor handed Tera back to Will with a small smile, it wasn’t one of mocking or hidden anger it held an air of empathy and the agent had to admit he was a little relieved.

“Come and sit down Will, let’s talk.” Hannibal motioned towards the couch and to his surprise Will followed without question, any apparent anger has seemingly dissipated and the rapid switch in emotion was slightly intriguing. There are going to be moments of calm and moments of anger for a while to come, but they finally seem to be in a place where they can talk about these things, so that’s exactly what they are going to do.

“I-I’m sorry about the chair…”

“It doesn’t matter about the chair Will, or anything else that you feel the need to lash out with, I will just replace them. I am more interested in why you smashed it?” Hannibal leaned back against the couch, sitting sideways facing Will as he spoke, and when the agent didn’t reply, Hannibal spoke again... especially when he saw more guilt than anger spread across Will’s face. “Will I know that you’re not exactly thrilled to be here and it’s a big adjustment, some days are going to be harder than others but I want you to be happy here, and I want you to be comfortable expressing any emotion that you feel without fear of consequence. You are entitled to your mental privacy as you are your physical, but if you don’t talk to me when things are getting to you that I can help with, then I don’t know how to make them better.”

“Were you mocking me with the coat?”

“Do you believe I was mocking you with it?”

“I did.”

“Did? So you don’t now?” Hannibal thinks he has just discovered the reason for the flash of anger that disappeared as soon as it appeared, that was a big step, it means that Will is allowing himself to become angry and dealing with that through the process of logical solutions and answers. Hannibal didn’t receive a vocal answer this time, just a small nod

from Will who also knows the man wouldn't do something like that. Only when the man sighed did he get an actual response.

"I'm fine… not that you believe me."

"I believe that you still occasionally hide behind your words Will, as though you want your words to mask the real things that you feel. I see you feel compelled to hide behind a false identity. What are you so afraid of?"

"You want a true identity Hannibal? I'm not sure I have one, I feel like I am many people in one body. Like each one has carefully molded themselves to deal with a different emotion, it's like each one plays a part that other people expect to see, they become a reflection of how I am supposed to act with what I feel instead of how I want to act. I am whoever they want me to be."

"Do you hide yourself from everyone including myself? Are you hiding now?"

"I think I used to yes, I try not to now because I know that you want to help me. You hope to journey to the real me. Yet, I don't know if that's even possible, because I don't even know if I've met the real me."

"Then I will continue to walk beside you and help you find this real self Will, there is only fear that holds you back from that journeys exit."

"Maybe I am afraid to search for that exit. What if the real me turns out to be a horrible beast, what if I don't like what I find… then what?"

"Then, I shall help you either win yourself over or tame yourself." Will offered up an unsure smile, the words he just spoke were on a level of honesty he never thought he would express to another living soul, they weren't just words, they were his fears, his insecurities, his hope.

"It's a scary prospect, being honest to yourself about who you are."

"It is, but your suffering, both past and present, even future or your memory of it, is like a teddy bear fashioned from glass shards, the tighter that you cling to it the deeper it will cut. So perhaps practice putting it down for longer periods of time, you will notice when you have picked it up again because slices at your skin. You and it are separate entities Will, and one day you'll notice that the bad teddy bear is gone, you lost it sometime and never even noticed. You will see that your good and noble choices made a better life, something positive, and one day you will hold a new teddy bear, one that is soft and warm, one that brings an inner peace… that day is not too far from here Will."

"Maybe then I won't get so angry over a coat huh?" Hannibal pulled an empathetic smile when he saw tears prick Will's eyes, the conversation is more than just words it's all Will's fears tumbling out unchecked, but he is there to catch every single one.

"There is a reason the coat is there Will, and I thought that we could discuss that over breakfast?" Will nodded but still didn't look up, instead he maintained his hand running through Tera's fur, still feeling guilty for scaring her, he felt Hannibal's hand brush through

his own hair but didn't feel the overwhelming need to move away from the man's touch, maybe he was grateful there was no irritation or anger after his tantrum, or maybe he was trying to show some submission? Will's next move did surprise him though, and Hannibal too, he scooted a couple of inches closer and allowed the Doctor to wrap a loose arm around his shoulders, seemingly seeking out some type of comfort.

"Why don't you take her to the bedroom and I will set up breakfast?"

"Ok…" It was almost a whisper, but there it was, Will was finally doing as Hannibal asked without much argument.

Will took a few moments in the bedroom to settle both Tera and himself, it's that rise in conflicting emotions rearing its head once more, it brings on confusion. Confusion is the scattering of his thoughts, but instead of letting it take over and ravage the analytical side of his mind Will reaches into that place that has taught his brain how to retreat to the pathways of calm, it's a switch that he needs to flip that brings with it its own higher powers that takes command of the situation. Will feels lost and confused, but calm and certain, like a ball of tangled yarn, the parts that are untangled are available, useable, but the rest is a mess, useless until it is untied. That mess feels endless and at most times unyielding… however there is a place he can reach now that he couldn't before and that's exactly what he taps into right before walking back into the room.

"How are you feeling Will?" Hannibal asks with a smile, pulling back the chair he retrieved in Will's absence, hopefully this morning's breakfast choice will bring back some semblance of happiness. There's a squeeze of each shoulder offered up when the agent sits before Hannibal takes his own, but once again Will's eyes travel to the shattered wood surrounding their feet.

"I am sorry-"

"Will, it doesn't matter, it isn't important, you are, how are you feeling? You look a little tired." Hannibal leaned over to pull the cover from Will's plate and the agent can't help the small smile that creeps onto his face at the sight of his food. Pancakes, it was a food he would have never of expected from Hannibal, he knows the man is all about health and 'real' food, and pancakes were anything but, instead they were a sweetened treat and one that Will had missed. Hannibal of course didn't have an identical dish but for the first time, Will's stomach didn't turn at the thought, instead he pushed whatever the man was eating to the back of his mind and picked up the fork without any encouragement.

"A little confused today… Thank you for breakfast, what's the occasion?"

"No occasion, I just thought you may appreciate them."

"I do."

"Good." There was an occasion, an occasion that Hannibal would not divulge to Will because the last thing he wants is the agent putting down the fork and picking up his refusal to consume the food. Their previous evening had meant a lot to Hannibal in more ways than one, Will had engaged him through his own choice and that was monumentos progress, and

not only progress but what Hannibal considers good behavior, and he wanted to treat Will for it even if it was subconsciously.

The hope was that Will is going to pick up on the reward and adjust his behavior accordingly, it was a harmless psychological trick with many benefits, but it wasn't behavior modification to benefit himself. Will had obviously calmed himself enough to tolerate Hannibal's presence, which means he will begin to accept other methods he presents, and those methods lead to Will finally experiencing a level of mental peace he once could only ever dream of.

Will's smile only grew wider when Hannibal placed a honey dispenser in front of him and he didn't hesitate to drizzle a larger than usual amount, intending to enjoy a sweet taste that he has missed greatly. Hannibal smiled as he did, basking in Will's demeanor, relaxed, seemingly content, but best of all, calm. It has been the first time he's picked up on that atmosphere and he loved it, it only reinforced his intentions for this afternoons activity that really could go either way. It was going to make for a repeat of the action or a mistake that would lead to dire consequences to the design, so Hannibal was nervous to approach the subject and questioned whether or not to leave it until lunch time? But maybe saying it now and giving Will time to think about his response could be a good thing.

"You really do look a little tired Will, how are you finding your sleeping medication?" Will shrugged slightly before taking another large bite, maybe he was prolonging his inability to answer.

"I wake up a couple of times through the night now I didn't before, but it isn't for long… I sleep a lot longer than I used to but I feel… I don't know, hazy."

"Do you mean hazy the following morning?"

"The following day, or maybe I'm venturing back into the disfunction of psychosis?" Hannibal echoed Will's huffed out laugh, taking the comment for the gest it was supposed to entail.

"Even psychosis is a form of function Will, in any situation plagued by multiple intractable fears, the brain pushes the boundaries of creative problem solving so far that that dreaming brain merges with the conscious brain. The result is of course a dysfunction, yet the driving force is a desperate survival mechanism to, let's say pull a 'rabbit from the ideological hat.' Until we get to grips with dysfunctions as functions, our solutions will be nothing more than playing with symptoms."

"Are you saying my symptoms are functional disfunctions?" Will couldn't help the coy smile he shot back at Hannibal's own, mocking without mocking.

"I am saying there exists real answers within your symptoms rather than your dysfunction. In a survival situation anger and quick reaction over slower more cerebral responses are engrained in your psyche to keep you alive. That's a function. And while we treat symptoms, the real cure exists in your ability to manage both."

"Well then maybe its just the medication making me a little hazy."

“That is a common side effect of the Estazolam, not all users experience it but some do and clearly you unfortunately fall into the latter. There is another medication that we can switch you to, it’s called Mirtazapine, it is taken once only before bed and encompasses all the medications you take, such as the anti-depressants on a morning, and the anti-anxiety medications. However this is highly unlikely to make you feel hazy throughout the day.”

“So I wouldn’t have to take the other pills?” Will kept his gaze at the pancakes, although it shouldn’t be, it’s weird to have a say in his own medical treatment.

“No, and as I say you will feel much more alert through the day, would you like to give that one a try instead?”

“Yes.”

“Ok, then that’s what we will do, eat your breakfast.” After a half an hour of comfortable silence and eating Hannibal begrudgingly began to shift. “Ok Will I have to get going otherwise I will be late for work.” When Hannibal began to clear away the breakfast items Will stood too, shifting slightly from foot to foot, he isn’t quite sure why but he doesn’t want Hannibal to go and leave him. Maybe he was just bored? Or tired of being alone? Maybe it had nothing to do with Hannibal’s company? But still he stood.

“D-do you really have to go to work today? Maybe w-we could spend the day together?” Hannibal’s brain stutters for a moment at the words he hadn’t expected to hear for a long time yet, every part of him goes on pause whilst his thoughts catch up to offer a response. Hannibal had a way of encouraging Will to see all that he was capable of, he wanted the agent to have the same mental freedom he had, so when he sees Will’s own choices begin to flourish, he wanted to build on them, make them stronger with encouragement and Will seeking out his company was a big step, Hannibal didn’t want to make Will need him, instead he wanted the agent to choose if he wanted him, and apparently he does… and that needs the reward that Hannibal is still scared to offer.

“As much as I would like that Will I have a lot to do today.” Hannibal could instantly sense the disappointment so stood back in front of the awkward Will. “We will do something when I get home ok? I was thinking that maybe we could take Tera out into the back garden?” Hannibal saw the shock that registered in Will’s face, there was a moment the agent made eye contact at the suggestion before his gaze travelled back to his fingers. It wasn’t just that Hannibal felt bad about Will being stuck inside all day alone, humans need access to sunshine and fresh air, yes he still has reservations about taking Will outside and he questions if it is way too soon, although the rooms he is confined to were big, there really wasn’t much to do inside.

“You are going to let me go outside?”

“Unless you feel that you may do something silly then yes, I need you to think about it before you answer Will because running away is not an option, and if you try it then we are back at square one, and that is a phase I don’t want to return to. So please think about it and I will be back for lunch, but it will be a little later in the afternoon.”

“Ok…” Will was still a little disappointed that Hannibal was leaving but understands that he has responsibilities, so he accepted the hug offered up with a smile before the man left for work.

After the long days of being so alone, the pain had ebbed. Will thought that he would feel the knives in his back forever, the long blades slicing into such sensitive flesh. There were days his brain felt electrocuted, so violently defocused and the pain, the emotional pain, was so all encompassing that he simply existed as a matter of will power. They say you come out of these things stronger, and he guesses that's true, but in this instant he will come out wiser too. Will knows that he still has his idealism and courage, he still takes forward leaps whether he can see the ground or not because now he has someone to catch him if he falls.

Being stuck inside all day alone wasn’t only emotionally draining but pretty boring too, and it did have Will questioning whether he truly wanted Hannibal’s company or if he just wanted it because he was the only human contact he currently had. As soon as the man left he opened the bedroom door and allowed Tera to roam the rooms freely, he moved to the litter box and carried it to the bathroom to clean out as Hannibal’s words rang in his ears. A few months ago the thoughts of outside were all that plagued his mind and he wanted nothing more, it would be his chance to run, a chance at freedom… but now? He isn’t sure.

Will knows that Hannibal wouldn’t even consider taking him outside if there was the slightest chance that he could escape, so the man obviously has ways to stop that in mind, maybe he shouldn’t think of this as an escape route but rather a chance to just be outside? If he does then maybe it will become a regular thing and more solidified plans could be made later down the line?

Dropping the litter box in the tub Will stands in front of the mirror, leaning down to splash some cool water on his face he stands and forces eye contact even with himself. Why does the thought of making escape plans make him feel nauseas? Why does it feel like he would be betraying Hannibal? The reasons he is here are those of self-improvement right? Not the senseless psychological torture he once thought it was…

Self-improvement to most probably means learning to care more, to show more empathy but for Will it is the opposite, he has spent a lifetime overriding the input from his primitive brain, the part of him that encourages himself to keep healthy and well. But the end result of that was bad for him and those that he cared for, they didn't know what his needs were because Will had no idea what they were himself. In those attempts to fit in, to become part of a ‘we’ he lost the ‘I’ he continued with that behavior even knowing that once the balance is lost, he was on borrowed time, he was burning emotional fuel without enough new fuel coming in.

At that point how do you ever rebalance your life? Will didn’t know, he couldn’t do anything to stop it and he just felt himself falling deeper down the rabbit hole… but Hannibal did know, he saw where Will was headed and put a stop to it, he plugged the hole and reached in to pull Will right back out. Now he knows, Will knows that in his situation, this was the only solution. Retreat, not kidnap. Recover, not isolation. Get a dog... heal and then try again to build a brand new life, a brand new psyche. There is only forwards now, and this new and improved version of Will that is pending will listen to his own soul, to the needs of both

primitive and higher brain, to give balance to his own needs rather than the needs of others in a wider society and personally. That will always be Will's battle, to keep his negative instincts restrained, to let his logic hold its ground against the fear… to be happy.

As he finished cleaning out the litter box Will ventured back into the main room and peered out of the window overlooking the back garden and the large fence caught his eye, the garden really was big and he knows that Tera would enjoy her first trip outside, so if he does something to screw that up then he doesn't just mess it up for himself, but for her too. Looking over the fence Will's eyes are drawn to large forest, Hannibal's place overlooked the entire thing, it was a calming view that reminded him of growing up, he would always spend hours hiking in the woods with friends, the memories brought a smile to his face and decided that yes, going outside is something he wanted to do, and yes he would behave.

Walking into the main room Tera followed close behind nipping at his pant leg as she tried desperately to engage her human in play, Will grabbed the tennis ball and sat into the entrance of the hallway, it was the only area that offered up the most space to play. Throwing the ball Tera chased it with great excitement and Will laughed hard as he watched the small pup attempt to pick up the too big ball between her teeth, when she realised that wasn't an option she used her snout to nudge it back, waiting with anticipation for Will to throw it again.

Tera was Will's saviour. In a world that appeared so capriciously cold, the puppy was his anchor. She's all hellos with those tail wags and eyes that speak, she's happiness in fur, an exuberance that needs to sprint, and more than that, she's an eternal springtime in her sweet emotions. After a few hours of this the pups small legs became tired Will picked her up and carried her back to the main room, moving to the couch Will ran his fingers over the neatly positioned lure equipment, half of him still wanted to swipe the contents from the table, but the analytical half has Will's hands reaching to attach the plastic anchor between the grasp of the metal arch, tightening the arms he picked up a small red feather with matching cotton and moved his arm in gentle circular movements ensuring it was tight and secure before tying off the edge and snipping the cotton. The action is repeated until each feather sat prominently in descending height like a perfect soft slope, Will had almost forgotten how immersive the activity was, it occupied every aspect of his mind and another four hours passed before he realised the time.

Hearing the door at the end of the hallway open brought on an array of emotions, knowing he was about to venture outside was both exciting and daunting. Still Will didn't look up from the final touches of the perfected lure, instead he moved his hand slightly allowing Hannibal to view his work when he sat beside him on the couch. "It looks good, I don't know how you have the patience."

"I always thought the same about your intricate drawings." Will huffed out a laugh that echoed Hannibal's own and waited for what he knew the man would say, attempting to finalise the answer in his own mind before offering it vocally.

"Did you have a chance to think about our earlier conversation?" Hannibal sensed the nervousness in Will's nod rather than a vocal answer, he won't rush Will but he needed more of a solid confirmation that he intends to behave as expected. "If you don't feel ready Will

then we can revisit the idea another time." Will seemingly takes a few more moments to decide before speaking and Hannibal is glad of it, it shows the agent has taken in the severity of what he was proposing.

"I think Tera would like to go outside… I think I would too." Will kept his gaze low, focused on the lure as he ran his finger up and down the softness of the feather, he was nervous but couldn't quite put his finger on the definitive reason, there were many.

"This will be an exercise in trust Will, you understand that don't you?"

"Yes, you can trust me."

"Good, then that's what we'll do. Why don't you go and sit at the table and we will have some lunch first?" Lunch was eaten quietly, there was a nervous energy in the air that encompassed both men, Will had promised himself he wasn't going to do anything stupid and just prays his flight instinct obeys that body order. Equipped with the knowledge or not Hannibal was hoping the same thing, he doesn't want to go back to square one with Will and an attempt at escape would do just that, it would be a breach in trust the man isn't sure he could forgive.

Once lunch was cleared away Hannibal put on his jacket and suggested Will do the same, "Why don't you put on your coat because it is very cold out today." Will smiled but didn't make eye contact, just nodded and grabbed the coat from the back of the couch and took the leash Hannibal offered up for Tera before walking into the bedroom to retrieve her.

"Tera come here… good girl." Will bent to his knees and smiled as the excited pup sniffed at the leash, twisting her body in an attempt to grasp the fabric between her teeth clearly thinking they were starting a game of tug and war. Once Will finally managed to wrestle the harness closed he walked back into the room with a half-smile that dropped slightly when he saw Hannibal pull something that looked like handcuffs from his pocket, but they were fabric, the man fastened one cuff around his own wrist before holding out his hand out for Will's.

"I don't want to wear that… please, I won't run away I promise." The sight was almost enough for Will to shed himself of the coat, they aren't necessary.

"It's just to be safe Will."

"Please…" Will didn't want to be cuffed to the man it was humiliating. Tears pricked his eyes and Hannibal pulled him into a hug, gently fastening the second cuff to his wrist as he did, the Doctor could sense the humiliation and upset so didn't release him from the embrace straight away, he doesn't want Will to feel like that, it's not a punishment. "I promise there is nothing to be embarrassed about Will, it's just to be safe, and if it goes well we won't need them, just trust me and everything will be fine." The man interlocked their fingers and Will nodded, but he still didn't like it.

The fear travelled in Hannibal's veins but never quite made it to his facial muscles, he has to make an example, especially as he could sense that Will was just as apprehensive. Fear is the most natural of emotions when a person is about to take a big, unsure step. What's more, the

emotion was mirrored in Hannibal's own soul, this was a real moment, significant and potent. There was a feeling in the Doctor's gut that said, 'no' turn back, it's too soon, but another in his that said 'yes' it needs doing now, rip the band-aid off, and what does that say about him if he is unable to find the courage to do what is right for Will?

"Ok let's go." Will thought he would have been excited to go outside, he misses it so much. But he wasn't excited, he felt panicked the second they walked out of the exit door of the hallway. The fear sits on Will like a pillow over his mouth and nose, enough air gets by it, allowing his body to keep functioning, but it's crippling all the same.

Standing at the top of the stairs is a surreal feeling, Will never thought he would see the outsides of his encased walls ever again and there isn't a person alive who doesn't fear being closed in, but in that moment all Will wants to do is run back inside of them. Hannibal stalls for a moment, giving Will the time to breath before they begin to descend. "Are you ok?" Will nods but doesn't offer up any vocal response, he just focuses on his hand grasped in Hannibal's and Tera tugging at the leash, unable to contain her excitement at the new sights and smells.

Will didn't share her excitement, he was going back to where it happened. Where everything happened, the good and the bad. Will wanted to take away the power of that one painful memory now, prove to himself that he could choose to move on so he focused on the memories he loved the most, talking to his best friend over dinner, many great memories and conversations had happened in that house.

Will looks in at the dining room when they pass, the images of Hannibal holding him whilst he slowly lost consciousness invade like a photograph and makes a decision in that moment, when his brain goes back to that fateful night he will divert it to the good memories, the healing ones. That way it's as if he has written a good story over the top of a bad story, and in time the ink of the bad story will fade away until only the good one remains, but when they reach the kitchen Will has an overwhelming sense to run, but not out of the door, not away from Hannibal. Instead he wants to run back up the stairs, back behind the safety of the closed door, Will tells himself it's because he is unsure if he can trust himself… that's the reason, the only reason.

Reaching the patio door nothing but anxiety and fear grab Will by the tongue and dry his mouth, he takes a deep breath and holds it, attempting to stem his own panic, he's been there before, too many times now and he knows the feeling well. So, instead of letting it take him down, Will tells himself that everything will be ok and takes that last step outside, sitting down beside Hannibal on the patio chair.

The sun was low in the sky now, only a few stray rays of light pierced through the thick forest canopy. The evening air was quite cold, a brisk, biting breeze wandered through the forest that picked up dry, discarded leaves in its gusts which tumbled lazily past the two on the decking. Regardless of the cold weather Will enjoyed the breeze's cool touch on his face, it was a simple pleasure that he has missed, it only has him sighing in contentment.

"So, have you always enjoy being outdoors? Even when you were younger?"

“Yes, I’ve always preferred it to being inside, my friends were the same so we were always outside.” Hannibal smiled and they sit in silence for a little while, Will unhooks the leash and allows an excited Tera to run around the enclosed garden and watches on with a smile. Regardless of the temperature it’s a beautiful evening, the smell of wet leaves is mixing with the frosty air and the sound of the distant trees rustling is relaxing. Will’s attention is only pulled when Hannibal reaches over and removes his cuff, nothing else is said, it didn’t need to be, it was a silent confirmation that the man trusted him not to run, not that there was anywhere he could run, even if Will made it to the tall fence he wouldn’t be able to scale it by obvious design.

About three seconds later Tera leaps through the small bushes that line the decking with a stick in her mouth. With those big brown eyes and her tail swishing it’s like she just got all her birthday wishes at once, Will knows what she wants, its engrained in her biology, but he isn’t sure if he’s allowed to move. Hannibal doesn’t want to give permission because he doesn’t want Will to ask, so, it isn’t offered, and it isn’t asked. Instead Will stands and grasps the stick, walking down the few wooden steps he tosses it to the end of the garden and watches with a smile as she runs back with it, she wants that slimy stick thrown again, and not just once, but over and over.

The bark leaves brown flecks on Will’s hands, but he doesn’t care, he can’t refuse the pup, she's just too damn cute. Still there is an air of awkwardness as he ventures further down the grass, he is sure he can feel Hannibal’s eyes pierce his back, yes he knows why, but it’s a little uncomfortable none the less. Will feels like a small child under the watchful eye of a careful parent and the feeling nearly becomes too much, he nearly retreats and sits back down but after a quick glance back at the Doctor, Hannibal is immersed in whatever book he has picked up.

The man’s action makes for a much more comfortable setting so Will curls his fingers back around the stick and Tera releases it at once and sits. As Will’s arm wheels backwards she runs forwards fast and instead of doing what she expects, the agent waits until she stops and looks at him, then throws the stick as far as he can and she hurtles after it.

Its easily an hour into the game when Will becomes too warm, he hasn’t had this much exertion in a while now so hangs the coat over the banister of the decking and continues their game much to Hannibal’s displeasure. He doesn’t look up from his book when the coat is discarded but he had to bite his tongue, the temperature was extremely low and could still make Will ill regardless of him feeling warm. Hannibal chooses not to say anything, he will allow it for a while, but if he has to then he will insist it is worn.

Tera’s attention is soon drawn from the stick to the small tennis ball and another hour passes until each one is exhausted, the pup’s little legs seemingly having enough excitement for one day. Its only when Will sits back beside him does Hannibal put down the book, it’s getting dark and the temperature has descended even further so maybe that should be the end of their time outside now, they could have had a little longer if Will had kept on the coat but suggesting he put the garment back on feels as though it may put a negative stamp on their trip outside. “Why don’t we go back inside Will? It’s getting cold, we can come back out another day if you would like.”

“Ok, Tera come here.” Will didn’t even consider arguing, it was beyond freezing and he was beyond exhausted. The situation though hadn’t been as overwhelming as Will expected it to be, at first yes maybe it was, but he considers it a success and Tera had certainly seemed to enjoy the trip outside. Hannibal was equally thrilled with how it went and hopes that this is the start of a regular occurrence, they weren’t at a point he could completely let down his guard, no there were still risks, but it was a good start.

“I would prefer you carry her upstairs Will.” Will rolled his eyes as he scooped up the dirty pup and walked back through the patio doors, he already intended on that action knowing her tracking mud through the home would not sit well with the man.

“Dirt exists Hannibal, and it isn’t as traumatising as you think it is.” Hannibal couldn’t help the slight purse in his lips that turned into a smile as Will openly mocked him, the agent pulled one more coy look before Hannibal urged him forwards and back up the stairs. “Well I suppose we can agree to disagree on that one Will, but regardless of who is correct maybe you should give her a bath before letting her roam free?” Once again Will rolled his eyes but moved to give Tera a bath once they were back upstairs, as much as he wouldn’t admit it to Hannibal, he didn’t much fancy sleeping beside the mud covered pup.

Hannibal took the opportunity to change Will’s bedding and grab the rest of his laundry as the two cleaned up before piling it outside the door, just before the young agent walked back through to the bedroom to sit on the bed. “I get my sheets changed too? It’s like having my own personal maid.”

Hannibal smiled as he sat beside the agent, pulling the medication out he offered up a pill and was glad it was taken with no argument. “Did you have fun?”

“Yes, I’m a little tired though, I might get some sleep if that’s ok?”

“Of course it is.” Hannibal pulled back the sheet, placing it over Will when he had climbed beneath, already feeling drowsy from the chemical cocktail. There are days the tiredness comes in both forms, physical and mental, like Will’s body needs to rest yet his mind needs it to move, to burn the anxiety right out, but tonight there is none, no anxiety, no stress, just the need for a deep sleep. “Good night Will.”

“Good night Hannibal.” Hannibal offered up a smile before closing the bedroom door behind him, the afternoons plans really couldn’t have gone any better and he makes a mental note to do it more often. Placing everything in for washing Hannibal made his way down to the office and went back to work, thinking about pulling an all nighter, he wanted to finish any unfinished work as soon as possible so he only had his physical appointments with Jack and his patients to worry about. Now that Will is seemingly more accepting of his company Hannibal is hoping to extend those times together if Will requests them, and the only thing getting in the way of that is work.

Will doesn’t really remember falling asleep, he never does lately but the first thing he does notice when he wakes, is that it seemed way too soon for him to wake up. It was still dark outside, and there were no rays of sunlight starting to creep through the clouds either, but looking at the clock clarified as to why that was when it flashed one thirty am. The next thing Will noticed was the aching in his throat and the weight of his own head lying on the pillow,

he slowly lifted himself into a sitting position, groaning loudly at the hammering headache. At first Will tried to shrug it off with being tired, or maybe it was the new medication? But when he tried to make his way to the bathroom he almost tripped on his shaky legs and his blurred vision despite the fact that his glasses were still perched on his nose.

Will leant up against the door frame, thinking about just going straight back to bed, sleeping it off but the nausea and thirst wouldn't seem to allow it. Using the wall to stumble the rest of the way to the bathroom Will hunched over the toilet and vomited, his stomach heaved pushing everything up and out until there was nothing but sounds emanating from his mouth. Crawling back into the bedroom Will felt too weak to stand, instead he grabbed the walkie-talkie Hannibal had left on the nightstand in case he was ever needed in the night and crawled back to the bathroom when he felt his stomach churn once more.

As expected the porcelain of the toilet had erupted a deep blue through the contact of stomach acid but this wasn't a case of forcefully expelled food, no, this felt more like the black plague. Pressing down the button of the monitor in his hand Will spoke out. "Hannibal?" Will tried to talk but his voice came out as a croak, but regardless the response was instant.

"Yes Will?" Hannibal is almost startled when the monitor bursts to life, Will has never used it before now and instantly he knows the reason must be a serious one. Will didn't like asking for help, but it seemed he couldn't make it back to the bedroom.

"Could you… bring me some water please? And an Aspirin maybe?" Will asked in a hurried voice, trying to suppress the coughing that was building in his throat but after the last word the vomiting started up again in earnest and Hannibal didn't hesitate to leave the office and walk upstairs.

Walking straight into the bathroom Hannibal sank down behind the agent as his stomach heaved once more, slowly the Doctor stroked at Will's back, delivering reassurance in his kindest voice whilst wiping away any vomit left behind. Will was paler than a sheet of paper and lathered in sweat, a quick press of a hand to his forehead revealed a fever as the cause.

Will continued retching until there was nothing but an empty pit in his gut, and happily rest back against Hannibal when it became too hard to support his own weight. A cup of water was offered up, but no sooner than it had been consumed, even that forced its way back up with choking splutters. Will was more worried by the fact that Hannibal would attribute this illness to them going outside and probably wouldn't permit it again, there is a moment that he wishes he hadn't said anything, but he felt way to ill not to. Hannibal once again pressed his hand to the agent's forehead, sighing when he felt the ravishing fever rising as it began to invade every inch of Will's skin.

"You're sick Will, let's get you back to bed." Hannibal stood and pulled Will into a fire man's lift as the agent's arms weakly clasped at his neck and slowly Hannibal walked him back to the bed, setting Will down against the soft mattress before removing his glasses to set them down on the nightstand.

There is a pang of instant guilt, Hannibal knew he should have insisted on Will wearing the coat when he placed his hands at the nodules of Will's neck, the ones affiliated with the lungs

and his respiratory system weren't just inflamed, they were immensely swollen. Hannibal's face set into one of great concern when he felt the risen lumps and the agent was burning up, well beyond the bodies capable levels.

"I-I don't feel good…" The fever comes and with it Will shivers, he feels so cold but the heat bursts out of from the body in waves. The response of a body fighting a virus is to widen its thermostat, to rise the temperature to a level that can damage it, but all Will feels is the ice that travels through his veins.

"You have a very bad fever Will." Hannibal stood and returned to the bathroom, filling the tub with cool water before returning to Will's side, he pulls the sheet back down each time the agent pulls it up over his frozen body, and when Will grasps it again, Hannibal gently pulls it from him and the bed completely. "I know you feel cold Will, but your body is overheating, we need to cool you down." Will begins a slow and heavy pant with the effort it takes just to draw breath, his hair lies like a second skin over his forehead and he looks as though he were just caught in a sudden storm. Will's legs are weak and there is a rising feeling of nausea from his stomach.

Hannibal took hold of Will's t-shirt raising him into a slight sitting position with the help of a supporting arm around his back and strips off the offending fabric, Will is amazed the muscles that were working so hard only hours ago now struggle to hold his own weight, he feels disorientated, his gaze ebbs and swirls as it tries to focus when he looked up at Hannibal again and surrendered quickly when the man manipulated his his body, feeling the heat rise everywhere.

"Ok we are going to get you in the bath now Will, we need to get your temperature down." Once again Hannibal pulls Will into a lift and carries him back through to the bathroom ignoring Will's moans of protest.

"No, I don't wanna." Will breathed out, trying to grip for the sheet that was now unfortunately out of reach. He felt way too dizzy to move again, all he wanted was to sleep but Hannibal didn't even try to discuss this with him, just gripped Will tighter when they sank to the bathroom floor, even the slightest of movements has Will's head spinning. "My head hurts." Will whined, slowly raising a hand to his throbbing temple, rubbing it in small circles trying to get the throbbing headache to stop.

Resting Will back against him Hannibal moved to remove the sweat soaked underwear and Will's face flushed again, but for an entirely different reason.

"This is going to feel really cold and uncomfortable Will, but I promise that it will help." Once again Hannibal braced an arm under Will's legs and back to slowly lower him into the cool water, Will gasped at the freezing temperature almost jumping straight back out. Will hissed, panting as he became adjusted to the water but was grateful for Hannibal's supportive arm around his back as without it, he is sure he would sink below the water's edge. "Shhh it's ok Will." Hannibal offered up a soothing mantra when Will's body broke out into a violent tremble and took note of his watch, the agent needed to be in the water for at least two minutes, but he could barely handle a few seconds when his head started spinning again and he once again attempted to climb out. "P-please s-so c-cold."

“It’s ok Will just a little longer.” Hannibal supported Will’s body as it collapsed against his own, stroking a hand through the soaked locks he pressed a kiss to Will’s temple and watched as the hand on his watch made another slow circle. Finally he lifted Will from the tub and quickly dried him off but didn’t re-dress him. Instead when Will is carried back through to the main room he’s laid on the couch, instead he’s and covered with the thinnest sheet he could find, as the agent closed his eyes in distress every few seconds, trying not to lose his orientation.

“Stay here for a moment please Will.” Hannibal made quick work of stripping the bed that once again had become damp in sweat, before re-fitting clean sheets and carried the agent back over to lay him down onto them. Hannibal barely managed to place the sheet over Will before he drifted back off to sleep, or blacked out.

Hannibal retrieved his medical supplies and chose to remain in the room with Will, pulling up a chair he sat there throughout the night, dutifully checking the agent’s temperature and breathing, mopping up the sweat from his brow every hour. Will woke up with a hazy mind, the vague figure of someone he couldn't make out sitting beside him, he could hear his name being spoken in a soothing voice, reassuring words following that Will couldn't quite hear. With a now cold hand pressed on his forehead, he drifted off to sleep again, but it wasn’t a comfortable one.

The images started to flicker in Will’s unconscious mind, a man that haunted his subconscious and tortured his unconscious mind. He would rap on the windows and shake the doors before shimmying up the drainpipe to climb in the open bedroom window. Will would hear him creep from room to room looking for him, calling his name. Then eventually he'd be found, trembling under the sheets. Paralyzed, naked, cold. The man would come closer with the knife, making sweeping movements to a music only he could hear. He would be closer, then further away and then closer again until he dived on top of him.

An ominous boom startled Will out of his abysmal nightmare, unaware he was already screaming. His cheeks were wet, and his entire body bathed in a cold sweat. The sheets were twisted around his limbs because he had thrashed around in his sleep, his heart pounded against his chest as he trembled. The room was entirely dark. No light anywhere. The remnants of his nightmare still clung to his mind, haunting him. Another flash of lightning illuminated the room in blinding light and Will let out another frightened scream when he felt hands on him, the darkness not allowing him to see the attacker but he lashed out anyway, kicking and screaming.

“NOOOO LET ME GO! DON’T HURT ME! DON’T HURT ME! PLEASE STOOOOOP!!!”

“Will it’s ok, it’s ok, breath Will, breath.” Hannibal was beside him in seconds and pulled Will into his lap holding him in a bear hug from behind as his eyes darted around the room, he didn’t know what was real until Hannibal switched on the lamp. Will's breathing turned to panting as he grasped the man's arms around his waist. “It’s ok Will, you’re ok, just breath… Shhh you’re fine, you’re fine.” Hannibal released one arm to stroke the Will’s sweaty locks, continuing the soothing motion until the agent’s breathing calmed slightly, tears began to flow freely in an effort to dispel some of the fear. Hannibal pressed his hand against Will’s forehead and the fever was still rampant and probably the reason for whatever hallucination

had terrified him before manoeuvring them so that Will was cuddled into his chest and Will didn't attempt to push him away or try to get away instead he gripped the man tightly not wanting him to let go.

He felt protected in the man's arms.

After a short while, Hannibal moved to lay Will back down but stopped when the agent gripped him even tighter. "No, no, no, no, please don't leave me." Will wasn't currently in touch with reality and was too terrified to let go of the only thing that he did know was real, so was grateful when Hannibal laid them both down, keeping him cuddled into his side with a protective arm around him.

"Nobody's here Will, just us, nobody is going to hurt you, you're safe." Hannibal kissed the mused hair and felt Will slowly relax into him.

"Hannibal…" Will mumbled in his hazy state of mind, still not sure if this was reality or still one of his dreams, and the warm smile offered up by Hannibal didn't make it any clearer, Will could feel his heart beating faster in his chest at the thoughts of his next action but he decided that this had to be a dream, it was too scattered to be anything else and gripped the collar of Hannibal's shirt, pulling him down and crushing their lips together. If this was a fever dream, he might as well enjoy it.

Will's lips moved lazily against Hannibal's, feeling too weak to push it any further than that. He felt like something was off, but this was quickly pushed to the back of his mind when he let his hand wander to the back of Hannibal's neck, gently stroking his hair while he deepened the kiss. Will felt like he could pass out any moment, or rather wake up? This was still only playing out in his mind after all right?

As soon as the kiss started it had ended, Will's heavy head soon flopped back onto the pillow. It was two am and Hannibal could feel Will slowly dozing back off to sleep, he put the act down to the agent's delirium and guessed it wouldn't be something that Will would remember. As his head lolled against Hannibal's shoulder, his eyelids finally slipped closed and the Doctor smiled as the rest of Will's body slowly leaned into him, the rest of his body going limp as he's pulled into the depths of sleep once more. Will's breaths were even and calming, the expression on his face no longer stressed but relaxed, his eyelids fluttered, but he seemed too out of it to notice.

Hannibal tried to keep his eyes open, he really did. But it was so hard, and he was so comfortable. Soon, that was all he was aware of, the soft mattress underneath him, the warmth Will cuddled into him, and his eyes began to drift closed, blissfully unaware of what was going on around him. Hannibal rests his eyes for only a moment, he will move soon, he has to, but his head has become foggy and it's as though every eye lash weighs more than it should and gravity has been turned up tenfold, his brain checking out as he slid into instant REM.

After a couple of hours Will's body jolts, letting him know that he fell asleep. For a few seconds the agent feels confused, unsure of where he is, then it all comes back to him when he feels himself curled up to the sleeping Hannibal. Stretching a little Will moves his arm a little lower down the broad chest beside him, pulling himself a little closer, his eyes fall

closed once more… his fingers idly scraping the fabric of the smart jacket until they fall just below the pocket, everything freezes when he feels the bulge of the door keys, nestled just within the folds…

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Will is presented with an opportunity of escape but will he take it or is he finally accepting his new life with Hannibal?

Hannibal keeps vigil over Will as he fights against the ravaging fever and suggests the next therapy room when he is sure that Will feels up to it, much like the magic mushroom therapy it could go either way... is Will going to feel the same euphoria and if so what will his mind offer up?

This chapter finally has some smut! I am not overly thrilled with how it turned out as I haven't written smut for a while but I do hope that it is enjoyed!

A huge thank you to everyone and anyone still following this story especially to the ones who have left a comment and a kudo it has been really appreciated and I hope the story is enjoyed going forward!

It's not that Will doesn't want freedom, he does. Though Hannibal is so warm beside him Will feels like he is in the wrong place, as if such comfort is only meant for others, not for him. A cursory look upwards sees Hannibal still in the grasp of a deep sleep and Will looks back to where his hands rest over the keys, even if he did grab them and make a break for it he felt way too ill to run, he would be caught. Will tells himself that is the reason he moves his hand away and closes his eyes, that’s the only reason he hasn’t run.

Not the thoughts of the dream, the hazy feeling of Hannibal’s lips against his own, and not his own action of pulling the Doctor closer to deepen the kiss. No, that was just a dream, or an hallucination? Maybe that was a better word for it because a dream implies it’s something he wants. Although Will knows if he lets go of those last remaining negative feelings, he could lose himself in Hannibal’s words and the depth of his eyes, maybe he could even feel at home here? Yet after so long of dancing around the wants and needs of others, always having to give an altered version of himself with very little in return, this feeling is foreign. Hannibal was the only person to ever give him something back, and it wasn’t a flippant comment or action, it was a deep part of himself that the Doctor gave to Will, a part he was glad to receive and running would be like throwing that gift back at Hannibal.

But the conflict is still there. If Will succumbs and finds happiness here then he has accepted his kidnap and abuse, if he allows his feelings for Hannibal to rise once more then it appears all is forgiven, and it isn’t. Even though Hannibal is the only water in his desert, he lays still and just watches, tempted but paralyzed. Fear has a biological reason and purpose, it is a mechanism to keep you safe, it’s part of a person’s natural intuition to run from harm but Will didn’t want to run anymore.

Once those feelings of fear have had a little time to be processed, the higher brain switches back on to make a real choice about what to do, to make a real plan for a viable, long term solution… and Will's is simple now, the solution of running brings the fear, the action of snuggling further into the man eliminates it. Coming here has given him more relief than he ever knew he could have, Will even has the tools to deal with his deep seated issues now and although Hannibal's actions of supplying those tools is beyond barbaric, for the first time he feels as though he could truly forgive the man.

So snuggling ever closer, Will closes his eyes…

Hannibal wakes as if it's an emergency, as if sleeping had become a dangerous thing, it probably had given the fact that he had fallen asleep with Will, and the key to the door rest firmly in his pocket only inches away from the agent's hand. Slowly and reluctantly, he uncovered his face. Blinked, closed his eyes, and blinked again, trying to dispel the last hints of sleep. Streaks of sunlight penetrate the blinds and he looked down at Will still curled into his side sound asleep, he leans down and kisses the mused locks before a hand rests against the still hot forehead, clearly he was still in the throes of illness that was getting progressively worse.

Hannibal sighed, he had so wanted to leave it a few hours before resorting to any medication, but clearly the sickness wasn't shifting alone. So, gently he untangled himself from grasping arms to sit up and drag himself from the bed, he sits for a moment before stretching his arms above his head and yawned. It was only seven am so Hannibal quickly leaves to his own bathroom for a shower and dresses before grabbing the necessary medications and makes his way into the kitchen to prepare something light for breakfast.

Instead of the cart this time though Hannibal uses a breakfast tray so that Will can eat in bed, he decides on three oatcakes with nut butter, a sliced banana, but also mixes in some anti-nausea medication. Will needs a strong course of anti-biotics, anti-viral medication, and more of the anti-nausea medications, but Hannibal can't give him any of those if there is consistent vomiting. Unfortunately that means if Will cannot keep his breakfast down, intravenous medications need to be considered and as the agent has an aversion to needles that will not be pleasant, so he is banking on the high fibre breakfast dense in complex carbohydrates to be kept down.

Walking back into the bedroom Will was awake but didn't look in any way coherent, his brow and body swam with perspiration, his skin trembled slightly and his gaze never seemed to focus. "How are you feeling Will?" Will tried to take a deep breath, attempting to offer up a vocal response which ended in some uncontrollable coughing that made his head throb again.

"I feel the way I look, probably…" Will finally managed to get out when he caught his breath again, massaging his temples again in a useless attempt to prevent his head from spinning.

"Then you must feel pretty good." Hannibal smiled. Will assumes that was probably a weird attempt at a bad joke, something to lighten his mood, his confused mind wasn't able to connect the dots that quickly. Sitting down with the tray Hannibal set it down and aided Will in sitting up with the help of supporting hands and a few pillows.

"What is that?" Will looked down at the oatcakes and internally retched, feeling his stomach twist at the sight. "I-I'm gonna…" Will stammered, pressing a hand on his mouth and Hannibal immediately grabbed the bucket in his hands and held it out in front of Will just in time for him to sit forward and throw up the remaining contents of his empty stomach.

Hannibal dutifully stroked at the agent's back using a tissue to wipe away the remaining vomit between heaves as Will's face burned red from the embarrassing situation of Hannibal watching him. When there was nothing left to expel, Hannibal placed the bucket back on the ground and wiped away the tears that rolled down Will's face before handing him the glass of water to wash away the horrible sour taste.

Will took it with shaky hands, not able to look Hannibal in the eyes as he pressed a hand to his burning forehead. "I'm sorry." Will whined with a trembling sigh, gripping the glass hard and Hannibal just looked at him with a gentle expression that Will could see from the corner of his blurry eyes.

"You don't have anything to apologize for Will." Hannibal reassured him in his usual calm voice and aided in resting the agent back against the slanted pillows, letting a hand wander to Will's forehead once again. "Your fever is still not going down. I have something for that, but I would like you to try and eat something first ok?"

"I'm not hungry…" Will wasn't trying to be awkward or ungrateful, and Hannibal knew that this wasn't the usual food wars, the agent was simply ill and had no appetite.

"I know that you don't feel hungry Will, but you need to take the medications with food ok?" Still will refused, shaking his head, he knew the second that the food went anywhere near his mouth it would come straight back up but Hannibal placed the tray over his knees anyway sighing as he did.

"Will I have two types of medications ok, intravenous or oral, and if you can't keep anything down then I am afraid we have to go down the route of the latter." When Will whined slightly Hannibal offered up a slight clasp of the cheek, the mention of intravenous drugs wasn't a threat, it was a fact, but it didn't make it any less terrifying for Will. Thankfully though the information clearly pushed Will into taking the fork into his shaking hand to take a small bite, chewing for longer with a dry mouth and swallowing.

Hannibal offered up sips of water between bites and only took the tray away when Will absolutely couldn't eat anymore and once again helped him to lay back down. Within minutes the contents of Will's barely full stomach was spewed into the bucket and the world turned into a blur when the fever rose even higher. Hannibal watched for the next couple of hours as Will drifted in and out of consciousness, he had hoped they could try more food but by the afternoon, the fever was holding and Hannibal couldn't hold off with the necessary medications any longer.

Will's coughing had increased, bringing with it copious amounts of phlegm and his vague and hazy reality became a wash with uncertainty, everything he was seeing felt so real and so familiar that Will couldn't tell if it was still just a dream, and when he started shouting out incoherent sentences Hannibal left the room to grab his bag and other medical equipment that they are now in desperate need of.

Will opened his eyes to see Hannibal's worried face looking down at him. Or at least that's what he thought he saw, because everything was still blurry in this barely lit room. Either Will's mind was playing tricks on him, or Hannibal was way too close, still resting his hand against his forehead. Will wasn't sure, he felt woozy and lightheaded, his brain felt like it was being stretched and even laying down he felt his balance become worse. Will's mouth was dry and he wanted to cry about the state that he was in, but he couldn't, there was no energy and no hydration to produce any tears.

Clasping both Will's cheeks Hannibal tried to make eye contact, but the rapid fire gaze was impossible to meet. "Ok Will, I'm going to turn you slightly, I know it will feel a little uncomfortable but I need to listen to your lungs." Will whined out when he was gently turned, trying desperately to lay back flat, even the smallest of movements turned his vision into a downward spiral.

"No… stop it… I don't like it." Will squirmed as Hannibal gently held him on his side, weakness taking over as he began to sob, he had never felt this ill before.

"Shhh… Shhh… it's ok Will, I have nearly finished. Try and take a deep breath for me." Hannibal was sure to keep talking, informing Will of what he was doing when he was doing it, trying to avoid any panicked confusion in the midst of a ravaging fever.

Hannibal gently moved the stethoscope over Will's back and sighed when there were pronounced crackles in the right and left lower lungs, his oxygen sats were barely keeping above ninety percent and his pale skin was even more grayed. Will was awake but there was a listless to him and his chest heaved more quickly than it should to bring in air, and Hannibal decides that is most likely Pneumonia. Every breath was a struggle, Will's phlegm filled lungs were desperate for oxygen but his body would not cooperate, a string of harsh coughs shook his pale and fragile form and he couldn't hold the tears back any longer, leaving him weaker than he had thought possible. "Hannibal…"

"Shhh it's ok Will, I am going to give you something and it will make you feel better." Laying Will back down onto his back Hannibal stood from the bed and shifted the oxygen tank closer, turning the nozzle he attached the tubing, ensuring they were connected and snug before affixing the oxygen mask to the end and pulled the elastic out so he could rest it comfortably around Will's nose and mouth. The agents first instinct was to push away the obstruction, he can't breathe! Its suffocating him, the delirium not allowing him to recognise the device was in fact helping.

"Hey it's ok Will, leave that there please." Taking Will's hands into his own Hannibal pulled them away from the mask and rest them back at his side, repeating the action when the panicked agent continued his attempt to remove the mask. The breaths Will took were entirely too fast and shallow to be normal, he gripped a handful of the white sheets below him and pleaded for the agonizing pain in his chest to stop. The oxygen steadily flowing into his nose had no effect, tears blurred his eyes, but he shut them tightly to avoid crying at his own agony.

Hannibal's next action was to lay out three syringes, one containing anti-biotics, one containing steroids, and one containing the anti-inflammatory medications to assist with Will's breathing. The Doctor honestly thinks that Will is too out of it to realise his actions,

but it appears the young agent's aversion to needles bypasses any mental delirium when his eyes go wide and he attempts to shift away, groaning as he did.

"No… no… no… no please don't! Please Hannibal." The sobbing started instantly as the last needle was filled and laid back down on the nightstand, Hannibal sat back down beside Will, moving closer this time as he hushed him and took to stroking the agent's hair wanting nothing more than to calm and comfort him.

"Will listen to me ok? You have pneumonia, and an extremely high fever, so we have to treat both of them quickly. I know you don't like the needles but it's them or a fitted IV, I will be very quick and it won't hurt, I promise they will make you feel so much better." Will continued to sob as Hannibal laid out his arm, wiping it clean with the aid of a sterilised wipe and picked up the first needle, but still the agent squirmed, pulling his arm in a weak attempt to get away from the needles edge but Hannibal just tightened his grip and administered the first shot.

Will whined louder and continued to struggle until the third and final was pushed beneath the skin, Hannibal pressed down a piece of cotton at the puncture sight and kept it there until the bleeding stemmed and he was able to apply a small band-aid. "Well done Will, all finished." Hannibal remained beside Will for the next hour, ensuring he was asleep before he slipped out of the room and downstairs to call Jack and each patient that he had an appointment set up with over the next week as there was no way that Will could be left alone for extended periods of time.

It was still quite early and Hannibal held reservations about calling people, but he would rather get it done now.

Will jerked awake after only ten minutes of uncomfortable sleep, he was burning up and the warmth of the sheet consumed him like a blanket of fire, as though it were trying to suffocate him. Will struggled against it with weak movements, trying desperately to push the non-existent sheet away from his body. With a hazy look down Will moved his head from side to side to ascertain there was no covering but whimpered when his head continued to pound at even the slightest of movements.

"Hannibal..." Will called in a congested voice, then coughed harshly before slowly blinking his eyes open and pushing off the oxygen mask. Everything seemed blurry at first, even when he picked up his glasses his vision still ebbed and swayed. Will blinked his burning eyes a few more times and things slowly started forming into a solid setting, although everything still looked a bit twisted and dilated.

"Hannibal." Will called again. His forehead wrinkled in confusion and worry as Hannibal didn't answer his call, did the man really just leave him alone in this state? Will pushed himself up on unsteady arms, then moaned as his head started hammering away with the sudden change in position and scouted the surroundings of the vacant room. Where the hell was Hannibal?

The single lamp on the nightstand was on but only emanated enough light for close up views of the room, Will was glad of it though as he doesn't think his head could take in anymore light than that. With a shaky hand Will reached for the glass of water that had been left next

to the bed but had to grab for it three times when his duplicated vision wouldn't allow for a first time clasp. As Will let the cold liquid sooth his aching throat, he realized with increasing worry that Hannibal wouldn't have left the room without telling him about it, or at the very least he would have left a note behind, which could only mean that something bad had happened.

Will's heart hammered in perfect symphony with his pounding head as he placed his unsteady feet on the cold floor and pushed himself up from the bed, shivers and vertigo attacked him in an instant and Will was forced to lean up against the wall for a moment to steady himself. "Hannibal!?" Will coughed out as he stepped forward using the wall for support as he made his way into the hallway, the fever haze surrounding his brain making him feel as though he were walking through a pile of cotton. "Wh..where were you?"

Making it into the hallway Will fell back against the wall and with no more effort to stand he slid down it and landed with an audible thump. Breathing was becoming too hard, even with the slightest of movement Will gasped and panted, but no air seemed to make it through, the panic sets in instantly as he takes on a hyperventilating pattern in an attempt to regulate the flow of oxygen and tries once more to call for Hannibal.

It seems like an eternity that he is sitting on that floor, his head rocks from side to side but there is no attempt made to stand, not until he finally hears Hannibal unlocking and opening the door. "Where were you!?" Will almost sobs out when the man crouches beside him with a concerned face.

"Will why are you out of bed!?" Hannibal once again rests his hand against Will's forehead and sighs when he deciphers that Will is just confused, the fever not allowing him to make sense of anything right now.

"Where were you!!" Will sobbed out reaching for Hannibal.

"I'm sorry Will I had to call Jack and my patients, lets get you back to bed." Hannibal scooped Will into a fire man's lift and waited for the agent to wrap his arms around his neck before he started walking him back towards the bed and tightened his hold of Will even more as the agent buried his face deeper into his chest and whined out in obvious pain.

"What were you thinking Will? If you fell you could have hit your head." Hannibal was angry for the fact that yes Will could have easily fallen and hurt himself, but maybe the anger was probably more aimed at himself for leaving in the first place. Unfortunately though the calls couldn't be made in the room for the fact Will isn't coherent right now, so if he were to shout something out in confusion then Jack would know exactly where Will was.

Will didn't say anything at Hannibal's words, he just allowed the man to scold him while he let himself be consumed by the safeness and protectiveness of his arms. Hannibal ended the lecture as soon as he settled Will back on the bed, he was alright and that was all that mattered.

After two days of Hannibal keeping vigil over Will he was no longer able to keep himself awake. He was exhausted from the lack of sleep, and, against his will, Hannibal reclined back on the chair beside the bed his heavy eyelids fell closed, drifting off to sleep. There was no

risk of escape, the exit door was closed and the keys were buried in his front pocket, so any attempt made for them would be felt, not that Will was in any state to do so. However, quite unfortunately, sweet dreams did not await him once he fell asleep. Instead, the moment his eyes fell shut, the nightmares began, plaguing his mind with terror.

In the nightmare, Hannibal was watching Will much like he had been for the past couple of days, but in the dream, Will was conscious, sitting up weakly and coughing raggedly as he reached out to Hannibal desperately pleading for help, but he couldn't move, he couldn't reach the destressed agent. The dream showed Will as skeletally thin, his cheeks sunken in, and his eyes hollowed as he hacked and wheezed, then, much to Hannibal's horror, the hands that covered his mouth began to turn red, becoming stained with blood. Will turned to look at Hannibal with fear in his eyes, giving a terrified gargle as he fell back against the bed, seizing as blood spilled from his lips. His eyes began to roll back and--

Hannibal awoke with a start, almost shouting out in horror as the nightmare sent sheer terror through his body, he looked down at Will frantically and much to his relief, he was still breathing, no blood stained his pale lips, but for his own peace of mind he moved beside the agent and laid his hand on Will's chest, sighing in relief as he felt the stable heartbeat and listened to the steady breathing. It helped to soothe him, but he was still rather shaken up. Never before had he had such a terrifying nightmare.... so vivid and painful. Hannibal's heart continued to race and he was still on the verge of hyperventilation. But perhaps now he had no reason to worry, whether he knew it or not.

Will began to stir, slowly opening his eyes he smiled when he felt a tremulous hand stroking through his hair gently. He sniffled, still deeply confused as the fever rose and fell but much to his relief, there was Hannibal sitting on the bed beside him, smiling down at him.

"How are you feeling Will?"

"I still feel a little weak… and hot."

"It's good that you are feeling a little hot Will, it means that your body is starting to recognise your accurate temperature again, do you think you could try and eat something for me? You haven't had all that much lately." Hannibal maintained his action of stroking Will's hair although he isn't sure why, smiling slightly when the agent offered up a small nod. "Ok, I will go and make you something light, try and get comfortable for me I won't be long." Will offered up another nod and pushed himself up slightly, resting back against the pillows he still felt like hell but not to the extent he had and was actually looking forward to some food, anything but the IV's of nutrients and hydration packs he was sure would follow if he didn't eat.

Will offered up a weak smile when Hannibal returned carrying the tray, whatever it was smelt good and the prospect of eating for once didn't turn Will's stomach, instead he happily reached for the spoon as soon as the tray was set down. The soup was the colour of an autumnal vegetable garden, the deepest green. Yet the hue was softened just a bit with the addition of cream and was satisfying in its thickness, requiring eating more than drinking. It was the everything soup, the soup that took any and every vegetable that needed eating and made something wonderful of it.

“Thank you.”

“You are very welcome Will.”

“How long have I been out...?"

"About two days now."

"Two days?" Will was slightly taken aback. It had been two entire days?? And by the looks of Hannibal, he hadn't left his side. The man usually didn't neglect his duties for anything, even for the sake of his own health, but he had for Will’s?

"You stayed with me the entire time?"

“Yes, I did, eat your soup and then you can get some rest.” Hannibal can’t help but linger his gaze on Will’s soft smile for a moment. That smile is the most beautiful thing he has seen in a while now, for it extends to Will’s eyes and every part of him, there is an honesty that is nothing less than a purity, a person smiles with more than just their mouth, well, Will did anyway, it was in the way he relaxed, the way his eyes fluttered. It was beautiful.

Hannibal smiled back before inhaling deeply and looking away, that purity was exactly what he was trying to save, Will could be saved. Not like the filth in the outside world, no, the only way to save them was to honor them and he didn’t want that for Will, he was an angel sent to live among the worst of society and Hannibal will ensure that he remains pure in every way. The Doctor had put the kiss down to the fever, Will hadn’t mentioned it so he knew it had already been forgotten but that didn’t matter, because this rescue was never intended to be for sexual gratification. Hannibal’s intentions are pure, but that doesn’t change the feelings that had already built within each of them before Will became a guest in his home.

“I’ve had two days of rest… three if you count the day I was semi-conscious, how about I eat my soup and then we can play a game of cards?” Hannibal guesses Will is getting a little restless at been in bed for so long, he would much rather the agent got some more sleep but he didn’t see the harm or any over exertion with a game of cards, so why not?

“Ok, but only if you eat all the soup.”

“Ok, how about go fish?” Hannibal huffed out a slight laugh at the suggestion.

“How about poker?”

“Yes.”

“Ok then that’s what we’ll play.”

“Where is Tera?”

“Tera is in the other room Will.”

“Why?”

“Because you have pneumonia Will, you were struggling to breath and the presence of dog hair would have only exacerbated those issues.”

“When can I have her back?”

“Soon, eat your soup.” The sky been very overcast and dark over the past few days but Hannibal didn’t want to turn on the main light as Will is still going to have a slight headache so he moved to the small fireplace and threw some dry wood onto it and used a match to get it going. The fireplace is their tiny sun for the evening, casting long shadows over the rug and then across the rest of the room over to the bed which was their set up for tonight’s game. The flames curl and sway, flicking this way and that, crackling as they burn the dry wood.

Hannibal left to grab a deck of cards and a bowl of homemade plain chips, before sitting back onto the bed, the chips served two purposes, one was to get some solid food into Will’s stomach, and two was to line his stomach, after the frequent vomiting over the past few days the internal skin must feel a little raw by this point so the healthy snack has many benefits.

Dealing the cards Will took his own before taking a single chip to place it into his mouth, without even realising he was doing it Hannibal took a moment to admire Will’s lips, perfect and pink, so soft looking as they opened and shut, chewing slowly at the snack. The man realised he was staring quickly and glanced back down at his own hand that he held, his expression unflinching as he tapped the cards before glancing down. “I call…”

Will displays a quick unexpected smirk, humming to himself as he places another chip in his mouth.

“Do you know how I know I’m going to beat you?” Will smiles as he examines his cards and looks Hannibal straight in the eyes. “You have a tell.” Hannibal matched Will’s stare, which is difficult right now. Looking at him too long lately always brought up…thoughts. But now was definitely not the time to be thinking of that.

“Really and what’s my tell then Will?”

“Well I’m not going to tell you that Hannibal.” Will almost giggled and Hannibal thought it was quite possibly the most beautiful sound he has ever heard, better than any orchestra or choir.

“That’s ok I’m sure I will figure yours out sooner or later.”

“I don’t have one.” Will smiled before looking back down at his hand, now Hannibal is back to thinking of his eyes. Sometimes green, sometimes blue, he could never really decide which they were exactly, so he settled on aqua, a beautiful mixture of both. Everything about Will was beautiful to him... it always had been.

“Everyone has one, and If I watch you carefully, I will see it eventually…. I fold, you win.” Will laughs louder this time when he throws down his terrible hand that Hannibal could have easily beat.

“So I don’t have a tell, you are just good at bluffing.”

“Are you being a sore loser again Hannibal?” Will peered over the frame of his glasses and stuck his bottom lip out in a pout, openly mocking the man. After a few more hands Hannibal begrudgingly admitted that yes, Will was in fact much better at the premise of bluffing than he was, (only in this game of course) he lost five games out of five and suggested they end their game for the evening when Will took on a tired look. Pressing his hand against the agent’s forehead Hannibal is sure that Will leans into the touch, the fever was slightly on the rise again so cleared everything away and sat beside him.

“Do you think you can take the medication orally? You are still going to need the antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medication for a few more days Will.”

“Yes.” Will decides that is better than the needles, plus he doesn’t feel as nauseas so he could probably keep them down.

“Ok, good, I am going to sleep in my own room this evening but you have the monitor if you need anything ok?”

“Ok, what if I want cherries at three am? Because it’s not like I can go to the store.”

“Then I will bring you some cherries.”

“I don’t like cherries.” Hannibal rolled his eyes, a little taken aback by Will’s terrible joke, not for the fact that it was so bad that yes it was funny, but for the fact that Will had used humor to mock his own situation and that is a huge step in the right direction, mocking a stressful situation is an identical stance of nervous laughter. During an argument, hearing bad news, or being in stressful situations can lead to an array of emotions, anything from sadness, to anger, but when laughter is used by the latter of those situations that means a person’s mind is starting to cope once again.

Rather than offering a confused response, a person’s body will start to use laughing as a way to relieve tension, it is believed that it serves to protect a person against the true nature of what is happening to them or around them. The experience of laughter increases endorphin levels, lowers blood pressure, and helps the pituitary gland release its own pain suppressing opiates and in turn, this strengthens a person’s immune system, boosts mood and diminishes pain. There are many studies that Hannibal has enjoyed stating that the ability to laugh easily and frequently is also a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, managing stress, and enhancing relationships… maybe now Will is reaching that point?

Laughing is also a form of social and personal bonding, research has shown that couples or friends who laugh with each other find it much easier to dissipate tension after a stressful event and overall, are more likely to stay together for longer. Other studies have also found that people who laugh together are more likely to open up about personal information, suggesting shared laughter paves the way for common ground between people. Laughter is literally medicine, offering up a physiological and psychological buffer in a crisis, it can be a powerful coping mechanism… one that Will is apparently adapting.

“Ok, I’m sorry you suggested it?” Will huffed out a laugh at Hannibal’s response, if he isn’t mistaken there seems to be an air of awkward shyness in the man’s demeanor, he matched

Will's laugh with an awkward one of his own as he offered up the medication. Including the sleeping pill and seemed happy when the agent took it without hesitation.

Hannibal pulled the sheet a little further up Will's legs, waiting for him to lay down and get comfortable but there is a pause in the anticipated action. Instead of laying back Will leans forward to wrap his arms around Hannibal, pulling him closer for a hug that was happily reciprocated and right before the man could pull away, Will's arms move to rest comfortably on Hannibal's shoulders, interlocking his fingers behind the man's neck.

Hannibal turned his head slightly, for the first time he was the one avoiding eye contact and it intrigued Will, instead of moving forward the Doctor seemed to grip his waist lightly and makes a weak attempt to push him back, but the agent simply uses his grip on Hannibal's neck to pull him forward again, using his arm to reorient the man's face Will looks him directly in the eyes before leaning in to press his lips to Hannibal's.

Hannibal can't help but lean into the kiss, pulling Will a little closer by the waist his grazed his fingers up the slender spine and Will feels little sparks of static dancing over his skin, unsure whether they're from his descending fever or if they're from the man's delicate touch, but either way, it's a magical feeling and causes them both to shiver slightly.

After a moment though Hannibal pulls back, almost pushing Will into a laid position and stands from the bed appearing nothing less than flustered. "Comfortable?"

"Yes."

"Ok, good, I-I will see you in the morning goodnight." Hannibal sports a counterfeit smile, sincerely hoping the awkwardness that bathed out of him in that moment would be transient, his blush seared throughout his cheeks at the unexpected action and for a minute he thought his face was on fire, he suddenly felt awkward, demure, and coy… even going as far as attempting to hide his rosy features by turning away from the bed.

"Goodnight Hannibal." Will can't help but be amused by the man's awkward demeanor, he doesn't think he has ever seen Hannibal embarrassed or shy. There's a kind of blushing that shows the soul, a sort of compliment to the eyes and the delicate sweetness within. It shows a connection, that the smile and shyness come from some deep emotion... and that's a beautiful thing, that's something real. Hannibal's cheeks are suddenly kissed pink like a spring rose, and Will couldn't help but find the blooming color so cute against his skin, and only smiles further when the Doctor looks away and finds a distraction in collecting up any remaining medical supplies.

Finally Hannibal leaves the bedroom but not before he allows Tera back into the room and then closes the door and Will can't help but huff out a laugh when he is certain that he hears the man walk into the exit door as opposed to walking through it. Taking off his glasses Will places them on the nightstand and picks up Tera when she starts pawing at the sheet to sleep in the bed also, the agent smiles as she snuggles into his side and flips off the lamp before getting comfortable, allowing the sleeping medication to pull him into pleasant dreams.

Waking in the morning it was a little earlier than he usually would but Will sat up in bed regardless, the thoughts of the previous nights kiss was still the foremost thought but

Hannibal's reaction probably took precedence over that. Never before had Will seen the man so awkward and maybe even embarrassed? The memory brought a smile to Will's face that almost morphed into a laugh.

Pulling out some fresh clothes Will moved to shower and then dress, taking a deep breath when the usual knock at the bedroom door appeared telling him breakfast was ready and moved to sit at the table, genuinely curious of how this morning would go.

"Good morning Will, how did you sleep?"

"I slept well thank you, and yourself?"

"Good thank you, please sit down breakfast is ready." The two sat there with small talk that was littered with smiles, the real communication, not the words. Although the main subject matter that should probably be discussed, isn't, there was no uncomfortable feelings awkwardness instead the silence of the topic told them of the love that lay there, unspoken, forbidden. It was as obvious as the morning sun and as real as the grass.

The feeling flowed through them as the fickle conversation filled the air, Hannibal spoke of the worlds recent events and Will nodded with apparent interest, the air filled with a practised nonchalance, neither of them talking about the things that really matter. The deepest secrets, the hidden pain, or what brings feelings of true joy... each seemingly blind to how superficial the conversation really is.

Will's talk gives away his thought patterns though egocentric like a child, he doesn't usually care to talk of what ails him, only seeks the quickest escape from the conversation, but it is as though Hannibal had decided long ago that it was his task to soothe him and any role reversal was unacceptable, including Will having to start an uncomfortable or unwanted conversation, no, that was his job.

"Will, would you like to talk about last night?"

"What is there to say?"

"I don't know, whatever you would like, maybe about how you feel about it?"

"How do you feel about it Hannibal?" There is something in the way Hannibal talks that gives him away, his keenness to seek information. It is always the same, starting with a little patter to relax Will and then he's in with the question that's burning his brain. Once he answers Hannibal takes on a variety of curious interest to acquire what he wants, but this time Will wants the information, he wants the tables to turn if only this once.

"Well, I want you to know that my bringing you here was never intended to have an outcome of that situation, I would just like you to know that my intentions are nothing but pure."

"I believe that." Will truly did believe that, the man had never tried to steer any scenario here into that situation, plus it was him that made the first move and now Will is glad that he did because he's quite enjoying watching Hannibal squirm.

“Good, eat your breakfast.” The rest of the meal was eaten in a comfortable silence and so was lunch, the tension seemed to dissipate as the day turned to evening and they enjoyed another game of cards. But Will did notice that Hannibal put a slightly wider gap of space between them but now he knows why. Yes he truly believed that Hannibal’s intentions were and are pure, but either way he still hasn’t been given any clarification as to whether or not the man enjoyed it.

Breakfast the next morning was a little less awkward and Will was happy after receiving waffles this time, he really couldn’t decide which he liked better, them or the pancakes. But he was in awe at the immaculate presentation for the simple treat though, the honey wasn’t in the form of a dispenser this time, instead a honeycomb sat in a bowl surrounded by the loose honey that it produced. The raw honeycomb was a marvel of bee engineering, the hexagon tessellation, a sweet golden mosaic. It was soft yet firm enough to hold, the wax chambers build strongly enough to hold their sacred mead as Will pushed against it with the spoon.

“How are you feeling today Will?”

“I feel fine today, I can certainly breathe easier.”

“That’s good, we will keep you on the antibiotics for a couple more days to ensure there is no recurrence. So Will, it has been a while since we last visited any type of therapy and I was wondering how you would feel about visiting the next room today?” There it was, the thing that broke the bliss. After the past week or so Will had been feeling much more comfortable with the situation, ever since the mushroom therapy, so much so that he hadn’t really thought about visiting his next psychological torture.

The prospect saddened Will almost, because he finally gets to a place where there is no anger at Hannibal or the situation and then ‘therapy’ is mentioned and it takes him right back to that place of fear and worry. Hannibal didn’t like the dip in the agents demeanor at the mention, so if Will really didn’t feel up to it then yes they could revisit it, but, this next room much like the Psilocybin therapy could go either way and could be a great benefit to Will.

It could be a euphoria releasing experience or one of fear and terror, and as cruel as Hannibal knows it sounds he wanted Will to experience both because if he does, he will have an amazing experience and will also realise that he has the tools to deal with the terrifying side of the therapy if it so happens to appear.

“What is it?”

“Sensory deprivation, or perceptual isolation depending on your standpoint.”

“So, like locking me in a dark room?”

“No, it is similar.” Will began to push the last few bites around the plate and Hannibal instantly recognised it as a habitual behavior when Will is feeling stressed or worried, and that isn’t what he wants, he certainly doesn’t want to tarnish the progress they have made so far, so this will be Will’s decision. Hannibal chooses to arm the agent with all the facts before allowing him to make an informed decision because he wants Will to chose it rather than it be

a forced action as once again, the therapy will not work if Will doesn't feel confident going into it.

"We can talk about it first Will, and if you don't feel ready yet then we can postpone."

"Ok."

"Yes sensory deprivation is the deliberate reduction or removal of stimuli from one or more of the basic senses. The dark room you first thought of is the use of simple devices such as blindfolds, hoods, and earmuffs that can cut off sight and hearing, and that is known as chamber rest. In chamber rest though, the subject lies on a bed in a completely dark and sound reducing room for up to twenty four hours. Their movement is restricted by the experimental instructions, but not by any mechanical restraints. Food, drink, and toilet facilities are provided in the room and are at the discretion of the tester, who can communicate with the participants using an open intercom. Subjects are allowed to leave the room before the twenty four hours are complete, however, fewer than ten percent of people actually do because they find the chamber so relaxing. We will not be using that technique though Will as chamber rest affects psychological functioning and psychophysiological processes which is why that method is often used for interrogation."

"Ok so what's the second type?" Will really wasn't liking what he was hearing so far, those feelings of panicked fear are on the rise again and he hates it.

"The second type is a different, more complex chamber, or tank if you will. The tank is a much more complex device that can also cut off the sense of smell, touch, taste, thermoception, which is the bodies heat sense, and the 'feeling' of gravity. Short term sessions of sensory deprivation are described by users as relaxing and conducive to meditation, however, extended or forced sensory deprivation can result in extreme anxiety, disturbing hallucinations, bizarre thoughts, temporary senselessness, and fear. Which is exactly why I don't want this to be forced Will, I would like for you to experience the positives of the negative effects." The prospect of what Hannibal is proposing is extremely difficult to put into words but from the fearful look now spread across Will's face and posture, it seemed he understood exactly what Hannibal was saying.

"So either way I will experience the negative effects? But you also said that extended periods of time can cause that too, so what is considered extended periods? And am I going to be in there for that length of time?"

"We do need to use this with an extended period of time yes, and yes there is a very good chance that you will experience the negative effects and that is when you reach into everything we have done so far, and that will turn the experience around just like the mushroom therapy."

"What is in the tank?"

"The tank and the medium consist of a low level body temperature solution of water and Epsom salts at a specific gravity that allows the patient to float. Fewer than three percent of subjects tested with this kind of therapy have wanted to leave before the session duration ends Will, and the therapy has been academically studied in the US with published results

showing reductions of both internal and external pain and stress. The relaxed state also leads to lowered blood pressure, lowered levels of cortisol, and maximal blood flow. Apart from physiological effects, sensory deprivation can lead to long term positive effects on well-being and performance of a person because it gives them the tools to deal with any stress outside of it as well as in."

"But what is the point of it?"

"The point of the therapy is to induce psychosis like experiences, the experiences that you will undergo are mainly subconscious ones, it will bring all that is in the back of your mind to the pre-frontal cortex so that you are finally aware of things that are bothering you and things that you are feeling that you didn't even know you were. Once we establish those worries and adverse feelings we can discuss them and find ways for you to deal with them long term, but like I said Will if you do not feel ready then we can try a different time."

Will took a few moments to think about the information, yes it was another scary prospect, but so were the mushrooms and every other room, but in the long run those seemed to have helped. Plus, if he completes this room then there are only two remaining and Will can't help but be curious about what will happen when they are completed, Hannibal said he would regain his freedom after them so would he stick to his word? And would Will even want his freedom?

"Ok, I will try it." As Hannibal cleared away the breakfast items he requested Will change into a pair of shorts and a loose fitting t-shirt, moving to the sliding wall they walked inside and Will was happy to see that the walls of engraved mirrors had seemingly been dismantled and removed. Hannibal must have another entry point to these soundproof rooms Will concedes, as surely the noise of swapping and changing would get his attention?

The room once filled with those terrifying engraved mirrors was now empty, all that sat in the centre of the room was some kind of white egg shaped dome that Will realises is the floatation tank, his heart rate increases when Hannibal pushes a button on the side and the lid lifts to reveal a shallow pool of water. Hannibal didn't rush the agent forward, instead he remained behind Will and allowed him a few moments to look over the tank and calm himself.

"Are you ok Will?"

"Y-yes." Stepping forward Hannibal rest his hands against Will's shoulders and felt the slight tremble, he almost wanted to pull the agent from the room and close it back up, after seeing him so calm and maybe even happy over the past week it was hard to see Will once again shrinking into himself with fear, but this is for the agent's own good.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes." Will was ready but he was nervous, still he allowed Hannibal to walk him toe to toe with the tank without a fight or hint of any struggle."

"Ok, please take off your shirt and climb inside." Hannibal took the shirt Will removed and held his hand as he climbed inside, the agent turned and attempted to sit in the shallow water,

but the body of warm water floated his own. Hannibal kept hold of both hands to steady Will before he crouched down and spoke, “I am going to set the timer for three hours Will, and you must stay in there for the duration of that time. If you begin to feel panicked take deep breaths and remember your coping mechanisms ok?”

“Ok.” Will released his grip of Hannibal’s hands and allowed himself to lay back, in an instant any sound was cut off when the water level rose just below his hair line, but when the lid closed Will was a little nervous at how dark it became, there was absolutely no difference between his eyes being closed and open. The miniscule tank was encased in shadow, no light breached it, even from the crack in the lid, everything was just dark, silent. Taking a few deep breaths to calm himself Will could understand why so many people found this relaxing, and if it weren’t for the impending tortures of his fractured mind then he probably would too.

Will isn’t sure how long he had been in the tank before he heard the voice. “Worthless… you are worthless.” Will is startled to hear his own voice as clear as a conversation, and shocked that for once it wasn’t Garrett’s, or Beverly’s, or even Hannibal’s… it was his own and so vibrantly clear.

“Nobody gives a shit about you, and why would they?” Will kept repeating it, over and over but never quite knowing if it was him speaking or an auditory hallucination, it was odd. His own voice seemed to sob the words, invisible tears streaming down his cheeks but not his physical ones.

“You suck at literally everything, and everyone knows it… you couldn’t even fire a gun… you couldn’t even stop yourself getting abducted.” The tank absorbed the words and echoed them back to Will, it could not give comfort through touch or words, it could only listen and repeat his internal self-hatred.

“You are useless, worthless, broken… you are a failure Will.” What Will heard what he had always told himself, and when this happened, when that voice became too loud to ignore, he returned to a beacon of tears and sadness in the night, but even though he knows its morning right now, Will can feel those wretched emotions returning at full force at his own imagined words, but for once Will was drained of the necessary ingredients for tears.

For the first time Will didn’t allow himself to travel that road of fear and self-pity, no, instead he changed tact. Tapping into Hannibal’s electro-shock therapy Will closed his eyes and thought back, he thought back to all the positives about himself that Hannibal had helped him find, and tapped into the nausea the negatives entailed and just like that, the voice stopped.

Will tilted his head from side to side, feeling the joints cracking as he did so and once he allowed himself to relax his entire body settled into a position far more comfortable than any bed had ever been, his spine aligned in a way that had him sighing in surprised relief. With a slight pop that seemed to emanate from his eyes a burst of color splayed out in front of him and Will went into a full state of euphoria, he had never in his life felt this comfortable in his own body.

With the room completely void of light, Will realised there was no reason to keep his eyes open, so he closed them, completing his physical relaxation.

Will inhaled deeply and exhaled…

He breathed again, deeper this time and the warm air filled his lungs, then flowed out again, his neck completely relaxed and he let his head fall back, but it did not fall so far as to overextend. Will's body felt perfectly secure, cradled gently by the ambient water but he could feel nothing against his skin.

For a moment the fear peaked at full force and Will panicked, it was as though something inside of him was trying to fight against his rational voice that told him he was safe, it didn't want to listen and release Will from its jaws of terror. Not until the rational voice came again, but it wasn't his own this time, it was Hannibal's… Will heard the Doctor's voice whispering in his ear to calm him, telling him to breathe, so he did as he always had and took the man's advice, taking a long, shuddering breath.

Will inhaled and exhaled deeply, beginning to count his breaths, just as Hannibal had suggested he do. Really, the man was a miracle in his own right, Will is allowing without question Hannibal to experiment with his altered consciousness to help him find a way to identify and deal with his hidden anxieties and fear, and although it is totally out of his control with no sensory cues, he felt utterly in his element.

That thought caused Will to tense momentarily, but his body refused to succumb to the anxiety when he had Hannibal's voice so clear in his ear. Will felt warm and comfortable, as though he were being held in his most perfect form, as though he were suspended in Hannibal's own arms. Shit… where the hell did that thought come from? Maybe he should try and avoid thinking about Hannibal right now?

But wasn't that the point?

The point of this entire thing was for him to identify thoughts and feelings that he is unaware of, so fighting them defeats the purpose right? Instead, Will let his consciousness wander, letting the sound of Hannibal's voice float through his mind and the thought of his caresses vibrate over his skin. Will didn't just see those instances in his mind's eye right now though, they were there, right before his eyes as if he could reach out and touch the man.

Hannibal floats weightlessly above him, Will looked deep into the man's eyes only inches from his face, and his eyes are so different in moments like these, softer than Will knew his eyes could be. The professional man is gone and instead it is the eyes of one who loves deeply, loves him deeply, if it were anyone else Will would drop his gaze, but with Hannibal he is drawn in closer, wanting more. Taking in every moment the agent inhales, relaxing as he takes in Hannibal's gaze knowing it is the medication he needs to survive the next few hours. In all the world there isn't another like him and in that moment they are no longer two separate souls, instead they are one entwined.

"How do you feel Will?" Will took Hannibal's face into his hands, arching with a soft moan when the man's fingers trail down his sides, in that moment there is only them and the darkness, but even through the shadows Will could see that Hannibal's pupils were blown, lustful and aching as their minds were connecting, linking...

“I feel good… really good…” Will didn’t feel as though he were floating anymore but instead sinking, he felt the light brush of lips ghost against his own and that was all the warning he got before Hannibal pressed forward and locked their lips together, Will welcomed it, welcomed Hannibal by opening his mouth slightly allowing the Doctor to deepen the kiss…

"Please…" The word explodes through Will’s lips until the movement of wet tongues and lips pressing and twisting is all he feels once more, there are no words, Will’s high moans spoke for him, he'd lost the need for them, they were left in that place where expectations, analysis, and explanations mattered. They did not matter here, nor did they matter in this moment, all that mattered was Hannibal’s hands and lips exploring every inch of him, Will shifted slightly, spreading his legs to welcome the Doctor and give him better access.

“Shhh… just relax Will.” Hannibal urged as he tentatively stroked his fingers down the expanse of Will’s wet body and the agent squirmed again, feeling his cheeks burn as he made another soft whimper of pleasure at the man’s touch, his body jerked when he felt Hannibal running his thumbs along the skin of his inner hips in a comforting gesture and Will trembled.

Hannibal shifted again, moving down Will’s body slowly, sometimes licking, sometimes kissing, and the agent couldn’t help but shiver gently under the Doctor’s ministrations. Breath hitching, he gasped when he felt Hannibal’s warm, wet tongue on his lower abdomen, licking and tasting him slowly. Will couldn’t help the soft moan of Hannibal’s name that escaped his lips, his hands falling to rest lightly at the back of the man’s head, stroking at the hair beneath his fingers as he let out a soft exhale, surprised by just how intimate Hannibal’s action felt.

Hannibal moved back up his body and Will whined out louder when a light suction surrounded his nipple, and warm, strong arms wrapped around him to pull him closer, guiding him down to a solid floor but the darkness didn't abate, nor did the silence in the room. Hannibal sucked a little harder and the action has Will arching into his lips, every touch is like electric on his nerve endings, never has anything felt so good.

Will felt lightheaded, almost giddy at what was to come...

“Shhh… just relax Will.” Hannibal seems to pull back from Will’s body watching down with lustful gaze as Will writhes in the water, aching for the touch that Hannibal has taken back. "Take a deep breath for me Will.” Will inhaled deeply at the request, attempting to relax and resist the urge to pull the man back to him.

“Good boy, now spread your legs a little wider for me.” Wordlessly, Will opens his legs until they are spread wide, exposing every inch of himself to Hannibal although the Doctor’s gaze doesn’t drop below his eyes, he simply nodded in approval at the sight. “Are you ready Will?”

“Yes Hannibal...” Will looks up at the man biting his lower lip, he is ready for anything the man wants to give.

Hannibal’s hands slide up even further until they delicately wrap around Will’s cock and begin to stroke slowly. Will arched into the touch instantly, “Shhh… just relax Will.” The hand around his length gripped a little tighter and stroked with professional precision,

knowing exactly what it was doing and he couldn't help but whine into each one, Hannibal's thumb occasionally stroked along the tip, smearing pre-cum over every inch drawing the most delicious sounds from Will.

The slow strokes continued until Will hardened in Hannibal's hand and then the grasp was lost, Will almost whined out at the loss of touch until he felt warm, wet lips press against the tip of his cock and he was engulfed into Hannibal's warm, wet mouth. Will groaned, face flushing deeply as his hips jerked in reflex though Hannibal's hands slide to his hips, holding him firmly in place.

Hannibal allowed Will a moment to settle, letting the agent feel his eager tongue slicking against his cock before he was sucking more of him into his mouth. Hannibal continued to move, sinking lower and beginning to bob, his wet tongue circled around the tip as he sucked slightly, drawing more pleasure from Will's body. Hannibal swallowed harder, flattening his tongue to drag it along the bottom of the throbbing length, groaning when he tastes the agent's clean skin, Will's personal taste was better than any food Hannibal had ever and will ever consume.

Will arched in the water again, pushing himself a little further into the man's mouth and gasped when another jolt of pleasure surged throughout his body. Hannibal sucked harder on the shaft and then pulled back, focusing on the head he ran his tongue and swirled it over the tip, groaning at the taste of Will. Hannibal continued this action for a few moments before his mouth began to move downward again and Will felt his entire length engulfed and press up against the back of the man's throat, then an almost unbearable tightness as Hannibal sucked him in even deeper.

Will's eyes rolled back when he felt Hannibal's throat close around him and swallow, none of his girlfriends had ever been this skilled, he trembled as the man's lips reached the base of his cock and Hannibal began to move again, torturously slow at first until he almost pulled off completely before sinking all the way back down again.

Will whined with need as Hannibal picked up the pace, drawing out consistent spikes of pleasure and needy noises. For every groan Hannibal moved his head even faster, ensuring that Will felt every movement, every twitch of his tongue and lips and it didn't take long before the agent was rocking his hips up to push himself further down Hannibal's throat as his legs begin to tense and tremble.

Hannibal strained in his pants and before he was even aware of making a conscious decision, his hands worked at his belt, pulling it open so he could snake a hand inside to touch himself, stroking in time with each of Will's thrust upwards, working himself to the edge of his orgasm quickly.

Hannibal smeared a glob of precum across the tip of his own swollen prick, squeezing and stroking desperately as he felt that familiar tightness growing in the pit of his stomach when Will's hips began to buck uncontrollably. Hannibal sucked harder, allowing the agent to fuck into his mouth, and stroked himself faster when Will whined out, unable to hold back the groans of pleasure any longer.

“HMMM!!! AH! Please Hannibal!! Please…” Will’s hips began moving at a brutal pace as he screamed behind clenched teeth, and Hannibal offered up one more suck and one more stroke of his own hand and orgasm was instant for both. It was an orgasm unlike anything Will had ever experienced before, he arched as much as the water allowed and wailed out in ecstasy as he released deep into Hannibal’s throat, but the man didn’t quite stop, he just slowed and licked around Will as he rode out the last of his high deep inside the Hannibal’s throat, leaving him panting and sweating in the tank.

“Good boy Will.” Hannibal’s words were hard to comprehend, Will panted rapidly as he came down from his high but when he felt the man shift again, he didn’t open his eyes though they felt too heavy.

"Breathe…" Hannibal whispered as Will felt him press a soft kiss to the side of his neck. "Breathe…" Hannibal whispered again as they sank to the floor still cradled into one another.

Together they drifted…

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Will's thoughts about Hannibal become relentless and after a dream he thinks everything becomes clear... Hannibal is becoming a little more trusting with Will but is it a ploy? And has he just made a huge mistake in his honoring Will's latest request?

I had to re-write this entire chapter this week as I bought a cheap charger and fried my laptop so I am a little nervous to upload this one as I am not feeling too confident with some sections, I really hope the story is enjoyed though and please let me know your thoughts!

A huge thank you to everyone and anyone that is still following this story! Especially to those who have taken the time to leave a comment, kudo and bookmark it has been really appreciated and I do hope that you enjoy the story going forward...

A nudge to Will’s ribs roused him from an unknown state of sleep to see Hannibal looking down at him, the man’s expression was one of fondness and curiosity and the agent almost found it soothing, almost. How long was he out? Will really hoped that Hannibal hadn't been standing over him long because right now he is questioning if a certain organ is giving away private details of the experience.

"So you found it relaxing then? I am sorry but I had to wake you." Hannibal held out his hands to help Will stand but couldn’t quite make out the emotion spread across the agents now pale face, maybe he had experienced the latter after all and saw things that he really didn’t want to see? Hannibal silently prayed that wasn’t the case, the only experience he truly wanted Will to derive from this time was one of great peace and relaxation, that in itself makes it much easier to think and may even help Will to pull subconscious thoughts to his prefrontal cortex for self-analysis.

“Will? Are you ok?” Hannibal released his grasp on the agent’s hands as soon as he stepped from the tank in favor of wrapping a large fluffy towel around him, when Will pulled the fabric tighter around him and his eyes darted around the room looking everywhere but at him, Hannibal became concerned and placed a hand on Will’s cheek but was a little shocked when the agent stepped back and away from the touch with a shuddered breath.

“Y-yeah, um, I’m fine.” How does Hannibal know that there is something wrong when he hadn't even said anything? Will thought he appeared unphazed but guesses his failed attempt at a calm and collected demeanor sort of gave him away. The problem with these new hallucinations and fantasies were their unpredictability, Will felt as though he'd stand more of a chance at feigned confidence if they were always the same thing showing up at the same

time of day. Will's mind however was far more creative than that, so his new apparent wants or needs could show up at any time and be anything at all.

"Why don't we get you dry and dressed, and then we can have a talk about the experience?" Hell no were the first words to enter Will's mind, his own private thoughts and recollection of his… dream? Fantasy? Made even him blush, so there was no way he was about to sit with Hannibal and give him an in depth analysis of what transpired in that tank.

When Hannibal stepped forward again to extend arms of comfort Will stepped back, his body took on a slight tremble as his face and body burned with a now deep blush, it wasn't cute one either. It wasn't a soft pink like a healthy outdoors glow, it was beet red and with every recollection Will blushed harder until he was scarlet and roasting hot. The only thought was confusion because embarrassment isn't exactly the right word for what Will is feeling right now, he can't put a definitive finger on the cause of his current panic and its terrifying.

The confusion was simply anxiety in a different cloak, Will's brain completely defocused in that moment in an attempt to allow his dreaming brain through, yet what he needed right now was the opposite, he needs a chance to regain his poise, his calm, and have enough space to focus on what matters. Yet focus and attention are the furthest thing from grasp right now.

Words left Will, he could feel Hannibal's expectant eyes on him waiting, he's waiting and anticipating a response but Will fell completely silent. There was an encouragement in the Doctors eyes, it was clear in the way they were warm and soft, Hannibal's words could be few or many, yet encouraging all the same. "Will you are worrying me now, it doesn't matter what you saw we can talk through it." Hannibal soothed but still, the agent couldn't will his lips to move. As if stuck underwater, everything was slow and warbled and his mind was completely blank, Will's eyes wide as Hannibal's desperately searched them… waiting. He had to say something! Will searched his mind for something reasonable to say, but there was nothing, literally nothing.

Turning from the room without another word Will ran to the bedroom and closed the door, sliding down it he moved to rest up against the wood hoping beyond all hope that Hannibal didn't push to come inside. The Doctor spent a few minutes cleaning and draining the tank before moving to the bedroom door, he wanted to give Will a few moments to compose himself of whatever has him so freaked out and Hannibal doesn't even attempt to open the bedroom door when he reaches it. The Doctor doesn't knock or reach for the handle, its closed for a reason, and that reason is Will wants it that way so no, he won't force himself inside, and no he won't force the agent to talk if he doesn't want to.

That philosophy is only enforced when he hears a light shuffling from behind the door telling him that Will is pressed up against it. So, Hannibal does the same and slides down to rest back against the door but he doesn't speak, instead he waits, he is waiting for some guidance of which direction to move in. Hannibal has controlled every situation thus far, he has calmed Will when he was panicking or angry, he has reassured and comforted Will when he needed that, but there comes a time to show trust and an ability to pause his own methods in favor of Will's. Hannibal wants to give the agent a chance to breathe after what he assumes was such an intense storm of emotions, and going forward with certain aspects he wants to give Will the right to choose what he does and does not want to talk about.

The dimly lit room seemed to shrink smaller and smaller around Will, his breaths came in ragged pants every time his thoughts venture back to the kiss, the abduction, the rooms, the fantasy in the tank… No matter how hard he tried to breathe normally he just couldn't. Everything is building inside his head and it won't slow down, there is an unknown panic and it won't stop, with his arms wrapped around his knees Will pulled them tight to his chest, his fingers squeeze so hard into the skin of his legs he knows that they will have bruises later.

The panting held an occasional sob that got louder each time Will attempted to silence himself and only then did Hannibal speak. "Breathe Will." Hannibal soothed as Will tried desperately to release his death grip on his knees to open up his airways through the tears and after a few more gentle hushes and soft words from Hannibal, Will eventually released the grip on his legs slightly.

"We don't have to talk about it right now if you don't want to Will, we don't have to talk about it at all, I'm not going to force you to do or say anything that you don't want to." Will was grateful for Hannibal's reassurance and they sat in silence for a while, his hands moving to clutch at the fabric of the towel as he straightened out his legs when the lack of circulation became uncomfortable. For the next hour there was nothing but silence only broken by the occasional shuddered breath, what is he supposed to say? Does he tell Hannibal what he really saw or lie? Or did Hannibal really mean what he said when he said he didn't have to talk about it if he didn't want to? How was he supposed to explain his feelings when he was so confused by them himself?

"Please talk to me Will." Hannibal was soft in his request, there was no air of a forceful request so Will knew that he didn't have to talk if he didn't want to, but at the same time Will knew that Hannibal wouldn't judge him for his thoughts and if there was anyone in this world that could help to calm the raging storm inside his head it would be him.

"I just feel so confused… about everything." The confusion wasn't limited to his sudden but constant feelings about Hannibal, it was everything. All of a sudden there is a comfort in being here, in this house, with this situation… he had fought so hard against it from day one always knowing that he would never accept his life here, but those feelings have ebbed and given way to not only what he was fighting, but that feeling of comfort has brought with it a whole new level of deep seated emotions and needs.

Will feels more at home here with Hannibal than he ever has anywhere else… and he shouldn't.

"What you're feeling isn't irrational Will, everyone and anyone would feel the same confusion when presented with your situation. Your body and mind are responding to what you are experiencing in very different ways now that you are becoming a little more comfortable here which can often lead to feelings of this nature, acceptance is the hardest part of the experience." Hannibal knows exactly what Will means when he says that he is confused, it was an anticipated and expected reaction that he has been waiting for Will to display, he didn't expect it now though.

This had been the purpose of the rooms, essentially each one had been acting under the guise of the seven stages of grief, and acceptance was supposed to come after the visit to the final room. Theoretically the only time stages are welcomed early is if there are prior or personal

feelings by the latter of the abduction. The reasons for Will's confusion can simply be explained by a psychological state of Stockholm syndrome, this is a condition in which a hostage will develop a psychological bond with their captor and setting during their time in captivity. The syndrome pushes emotional bonds to be formed between captors and captives during intimate time together, but intimate time together doesn't necessarily have to mean sex, it can be anything from intimate conversations to a simple act such as a hug.

This bond is formed by way of self-internal preservation, the human body is an exceptional thing and it will visit a variety of levels to protect itself from psychological pain because those issues eventually lead to physical ailments and one of those levels are acceptance to prevent these physical ailments. So, keeping someone captive for a long period of time almost always leads to Stockholm syndrome in which the victims mind starts to feel a loyalty toward the person who kidnapped them and may even start to develop sexual feelings for their captor. This is exactly why Hannibal freaked out after Will had kissed him, sexual gratification was never the reason he had decided to take Will, he meant what he said when he claimed his motives were pure.

But just because his actions were based around nothing but helping Will, that didn't change the fact that yes there were feelings there between them, and yes those feelings are being felt by both, but most importantly they developed long before Will became a guest in Hannibal's home.

Will pondered the man's words for a minute.

"Well… I don't like feeling this way." Will said softly.

"I know that Will, and if there was something that I could say or do to take away those feelings instantly I promise you that I would, but I can't. There are ways that we can try and arrange everything that is clouding your mind though, one of those ways is talking openly and honestly about the things that are worrying, or even scaring you."

"You mean a therapist Hannibal?" Will huffed out a slight laugh echoed by Hannibal's own at the comment.

"Yes, but not me I'm way too expensive."

"I guess I should be grateful that the FBI foot the original bill then huh?" Will smiled slightly, it always amazed him that even in the depths of his deepest sorrow or confusion, Hannibal could always draw a smile from him.

"But seriously Will that talk doesn't necessarily have to be with me, that is the reason I gave you the diary, I know it may feel like a pointless exercise but you would be surprised by the psychological benefits it has. Sometimes when a person sees their emotions written down in black and white they are easier to process, it's a tried and tested outlet Will. But whenever you need to, you can always talk to me about anything without fear of judgement… I only want to help you."

Will listened with great comfort, there was something deeply intimate about knowing that Hannibal meant every word, and he would never ask him to do something unless it was

beneficial, but he still found the prospect of writing in the diary difficult. Will hadn't really understood why until this point but maybe that was exactly it? Because he would see everything he thinks and feels down in black and white, and maybe he just wasn't ready to face certain things yet.

Hannibal understood Will's thought process better than anyone and helping to rationalize the thoughts that went through his head was the first step to instilling some semblance of calm. It appeared to work as Hannibal heard Will take a deep breath, and it was deeper than he had breathed in a long time. "I know things are hard for you Will, but I will always be here for you, you always have me no matter what."

"I know..." The true meaning behind the man's words did not go unnoticed and Will appreciated it.

"Why don't you get some sleep and we can talk in the morning?"

"Ok…"

"Please take your medication for me Will."

"I will." Hannibal was always sure to leave Will's sleeping medication in the nightstand beside the bed, there was an unspoken trust there and the agent never faulted, but only one of each pill was ever left in the drawer though, one for the morning, noon, and night, it wasn't that Hannibal didn't trust Will… but all it would take is one panic attack or one bout of fear and the unescapable emotions that could have Will swallowing an entire bottle to stem the pain.

Hannibal stood and moved to leave against his better judgement, again, yes he did trust Will, he just didn't like the thought of leaving him alone in a panicked state, but sometimes that's exactly what a person needs, some time to themselves to work through whatever they need to work through. Will shed himself of the towel and dressed in some loose shorts and a t-shirt before taking the sleeping pill and moved to pick up Tera before climbing into bed, he appreciated the fact that Hannibal was allowing him his own reaction to his feelings instead of forcing a conversation, and pretty soon, his eyes drifted closed and he was pulled into the realms of sleep.

Will doesn't remember climbing out of bed, but when his mind focuses the hallway that now stood before him branched off into several rooms… it's a labyrinth of the mind as the two rooms he knows have morphed into several, their open archways are now doorless and replaced with drapes of sheer flowing, silk material. A dense fog seemed to curl from beneath the thin fabric and billowed into the hallway as dense clouds of sweet scents filled the hallway. Tendrils of it swirled up into the air almost cutting off his line of sight, but the fog that rose to fill the remaining space wasn't quite opaque, instead its long grey wisps seemed to curl with others that were much darker, some near black.

These stretching entities of fog would show themselves in short, dramatic eclipses before falling back to the ground to cover Will's feet… taking a step into the hallway it extends, no one footstep allows Will to reach the end. The world is aquiver, shaking and blurring at the

edges as the mist thickens and Will can't tell up from down, the light that ensnares the hallway is a deep red that cascades through the mist and its nothing less than terrifying.

Will takes another step, and then another, another, another, until he sets to a run but each step that brings him closer to the exit door has the hallway stretching… expanding, never allowing him to quite reach the door. Its as though an invisible guide is pushing him to enter one of the multiple doors that now scatter the walls instead, the swaying black fabric covers the views inside each room, he will have to walk inside to learn their contents.

The panic is unbearable and its building once again. "Hannibal!?" An echoed shout of Hannibal's name is torn from Will's chest as the fog gets thicker and rises past his knees, the mists edge now rests just below his neck before rising past his line of sight and Will's arms fall out in front of him guiding him to where his eyes can no longer see.

Pushing aside the fabric that covers the closest arch of the door Will inhales deeply before he walks inside, there is nothing but darkness, the mist has gone and given way to a whole new level of blindness but a sweet, smooth, mellifluous music that flows gently through the space and Will blinks as something slowly comes into view.

The darkness breaks and Will comes face to face with himself, for a moment his eyes go wide as he watches his nude self grasp his hair and groan… throwing his head back to rest against Hannibal's shoulder as the Doctor stands directly behind his reflection, his hand moves over his groin and once again his nude self whines, arching into his touch. Will backs out of the room turning to run down the hall again, there's no exit… there's no way out!

Hesitating Will steps inside the next door… his nude reflection is laying down on the bed this time, his legs spread wide and Hannibal is settled between them, he arches off the bed with a moan as the man's head moves faster against his groin… Will scrunches his eyes closed before walking backwards this time.

The hallway is expanding, his heart begins to pound as no one way shows an escape…

Will hears the sounds in the next room before he walks inside, his once again nude reflection is bent over on all fours, Hannibal's hands grasp tightly to his hips and a slew of pleasured moans ring out as the man thrusts forward hard and fast… Will watches for only a moment before once again backing away from the sight of Hannibal fucking into him.

"Will…" Relief floods Will's existence. This feeling when he hears Hannibal's voice, he can't quite capture it with words, he turns to find the source of Hannibal's voice and homesickness floods him. Will is longing for that safe place with Hannibal when he realizes he is alone in the rising fog, he can't help the fear that cripples his gut.

"Will…"

"H-Hannibal… where are you!?" The fog that had started out as thin sheen, something Will's lungs could pierce and breathe through turns into a deluge of ice water surrounding every limb, creeping higher until it passes his mouth and nose and stems the oxygen… he's drowning. That's when the attack becomes absolute, shutting Will's body down as an invisible hand clasps over his mouth with an equally tight ghostly hypodermic of adrenaline

pierces his heart, unloading in an instant. Will feels his ribs heaving as if bound by ropes, straining to inflate his lungs, his head is a carousel of fears spinning out of control, each one pushing his mind into further blackness and Will wants to run, but he needs to freeze.

“Come to me Will…”

“I’m trying…” With a shuddered breath Will walked through the next door… approaching the seemingly empty bed centred in the room and didn’t resist as a hand came up to pull him down onto it, with a slight roll he was laid gently on his back as Hannibal appeared above him and for the first time when their lips pressed together Hannibal kissed him back. The kiss turning into a kind of lust that was almost like hunger and Will suddenly couldn’t understand why he’d been so stubborn about admitting his feelings.

In that split second before Hannibal’s touch every nerve in Will’s brain and body is electrified. It's the anticipation of being together in a way that's more than words. Will feels Hannibal’s warmth and already his mind has placed their lips together, but instead the man leans in to caress the agent’s neck, slow and gentle. Will can hardly bare it. He wants the man’s lips now, he felt hot breath on his neck and then the tender brush of lips, burning as they make contact with his soft skin.

Hannibal’s hand strokes through Will’s mused locks as he moves back to his lips and the kisses become harder and more urgent, forcing a desperate sigh to leave Will's lips when waves of static pleasure runs throughout his entire body at the man’s touch.

Closing his eyes Will knew what he wanted Hannibal to do, he had lost all rational thought, amazed at how one touch of his lips could hitch his breath. “Hannibal…” Will’s voice wavers, exhilarated but nervous, this level of intimacy had always made him anxious but he liked it when Hannibal touched him, it felt… different, and he didn’t want the man to stop.

Another hand slides around Will’s waist and he lets out a soft mewl as Hannibal roughly pulls their bodies closer and he can't help but melt under the dark stare of the Doctor, it’s as though Hannibal is looking right into his soul and there is no urge to look away this time, instead Will’s hands move up to settle on Hannibal’s shoulders, grasping at the smart dress shirt so tightly his knuckles turn white. In that moment of comfortable gaze Will knows that Hannibal is always going to be there for him, in more ways than he could have ever imagined possible and that feeling is awash with safety.

"Please…" The plea is ripped from Will’s lips, it’s followed by a slew of whines as the weight of Hannibal’s body grinds down against him and after a few delicate touches of Hannibal’s warm lips his hands start to do his bidding, all previous thoughts stopped in their tracks. Now there is only one desire, one wish, and they both knew it was just a matter of time before it happened, Will knew what he wanted Hannibal to do, he had been longing for his touch for many months now, and finally he was here, ready to fulfil every need he had.

“Look at you Will, spread so wide for me… so perfect.” Will arched at the words, making no complaint when Hannibal hands glide up his sides to push off his offending shirt exposing bare skin, pretty soon his pants followed suit and the nudity felt more intimate than before, the shame and embarrassment that was present in the the tank has vanished, it’s been replaced with an aching need to take whatever the man is willing to give and Will shuddered as his

legs spread wider in a wordless invitation to Hannibal. It was all Will could think about, how it would feel to have the man inside of him, claiming him.

“Hannibal…” Will’s breath caught in his throat as Hannibal pulled off his own shirt to display the broad muscle and skin, their eyes locked as the man shed his own pants and a surge of adrenaline flowed through Will as the enormity of what was about to happen hit him.

Will made a soft noise as he pulled Hannibal closer, pressing their bodies together in a lewd and needful way. Hannibal’s hands fell down to his hips, encouraging him to pick up a soft grinding rhythm so Will could feel he was just as hard, and for a few moments they stayed like that, writhing against each other as their kiss turned deep and hungry.

Will’s back arches in anticipation as Hannibal’s fingers grazed his hips, he knows where the man’s fingers will soon reach and his head rocks back against the pillows in anticipation, the first moan escaping his lips when he feels Hannibal’s fingers circle his hole without pushing in, and then he felt it. Two fingers circle his entrance before they are pushed through the tight ring of muscle and Will groaned at the intrusion, gasping in a mix of pain and pleasure coated with deep lust when Hannibal curled them.

The pressure, the sliding and fullness consumed him, Will squirmed again but soon whined as he began to push back down onto them with need and soon, there was another pushing in with gentle slowness. Will’s squirming stilled, all he could do was try to deal with the sensations as the broad fingers slid in and out of him with apparent ease, sometimes scissoring open to stretch him even further. By the time Hannibal’s third finger entered him he broke out into a soft pant making soft, needful sounds, writhing as his cock throbbed hard against his stomach, almost painfully hard.

The sheer intensity of the fingers deep inside of him takes Will by surprise and every single part of him pushed down onto it, he can’t help but moan out with every burst of white, shaking and arching as his head falls back against the pillows. Barely able to handle the bliss Will’s body jerks violently as the pleasure ebbs out of him, his thighs twitch and flex, his hips bucking desperately as his body thrusts forward with every inward push of Hannibal’s fingers.

“Hannibal… please!”

“Shhh just breathe.” Will whined, but the reassurance was enough to still him, instead his mind turned to what was about to happen and who was about to be inside of him. Will had known it would have to happen but he whined nonetheless as the fingers slipped out of him, it left him feeling empty, mourning the loss until Hannibal pushed back in between his legs.

“Are you ready, Will?” Will almost whined at the question, it had been so hard to answer before, but now the words slipped easily off his tongue… he wanted it too much.

“Yes Hannibal... I want you...” Hannibal smiled leaning in to press their lips together again and then he was pushing in without warning, and kept going, filling Will so deeply, and so completely. It felt better than anything Will had ever known.

The pleasure, the intimacy, the way the man kissed him and held him.

But then Hannibal moved….

Rolling his hips forward Hannibal buried his cock to the hilt into the tight heat of Will and the agent hisses, tightening his hole like a vice. Hannibal grasps the side of Will's hip hard, his fingers digging into flesh as he uses it as leverage to pull the agent down onto each thrust and Will couldn't help but respond, his arms moved up to wrap around Hannibal's neck as he dropped himself down to meet the Doctors every upward push of his cock. Will hadn't known that anything could feel so good… How could he have denied himself this for so long? He wasn't aware of the gasps and moans he was making, he was only aware of the pleasure as Hannibal brushed up against that spot inside him again and again.

"So tight Will… so perfect." Hannibal groans out, sighing at the tight heat as he languidly rolls his hips, he has Will exactly where he wants him now, content to take it slow. The drag of his cock, the feel of Will clenched around him is blissful. "You feel so good Will." Hannibal spoke soothingly as he fucked Will for a while, his thrusts were shallow at first, but quickly began building in depth and rhythm.

It had started slow, gentle, but it didn't take long before Hannibal gave in to what they both wanted and began to give Will a good fucking, groaning as the agent's breathing changed with every thrust, Hannibal watched Will's reactions, watching his body writhe, finding a rhythm that drew the filthiest moans he's ever heard.

"Harder…!" Will arched his back as Hannibal began pounding into him, screaming out as he dug his nails into the skin of the man's back, pulling him closer in an attempt to get him deeper, closer, anything!

Groaning loudly Hannibal dragged Will's body impossibly closer and slammed their lips together, picking up the pace he began to fuck the agent with reckless abandon, slamming his hips forward hard Hannibal lost all sense of time in those tight muscled walls that squeezed him so damn hard, it took everything he had not to just nut after two or three thrusts. Will's moans only got louder as the Doctor started fucking up into him even faster, nails cutting into the pale hips as he grunted loudly, nearing his high.

Hannibal gives a particular harsh thrust up, using his whole body with the force of it, lifting Will's thin frame clean off the bed easily and the agent couldn't hold back any longer, his body grinds into the sensation as the pleasure begins to steadily rise, he was getting close and he can't stop himself, he could feel his orgasm building in the pit of his stomach and his entire body writhes as his eyes see nothing but sparks of white. Will began rocking his hips faster, pushing himself down onto every one of Hannibal's thrusts, every inch of his body shook and vibrated and he knew he was about to cum.

"Hannibal close!"

A sheen of sweat covered Hannibal's skin as Will writhed beneath him, his legs hugging tight to his hips and after a few more thrusts of pistoning hips Will gasps before arching from the bed, his mouth falling open, a mix of a scream and moan followed. His head fell back against the pillows as his entire body clamped up, tremors taking over as his manhood pulsed white hot cum spilling over his stomach. Will's world exploded into pleasure as he came, his arms clinging desperately to the man who was still moving above him, his toes curling into the

sheets. For a few, overwhelming moments, Hannibal continued to move inside him, it wasn't quite pleasure, but it wasn't pain either, but it was too much.

Will fears he will pass out, he can't breathe, his body shakes violently as the man continues to fuck into him, his head begins to pound as Hannibal starts thrusting even faster, holding him tightly in place. The Doctor groans loudly, pumping his hips up to deliver several deep thrusts, he's so close, his balls are heavy and the feeling of Will's body jerking from overstimulation has Hannibal reaching climax, Will moaned louder as the man thrust up hard one more time, throwing his head back with a loud groan as he came deep inside. Breathing heavy, Hannibal continued moving his hips in slow, deep, circular motions, riding out the last of his high.

Both men stilled, and Will blushed at what had happened, but even in the aftermath he couldn't regret it. He was just left with a happy, sated glow as they finally parted their kiss. The man was staring down at him with a soft, affectionate smile, and he gave a shy one of his own. There were so many emotions and feelings running through him, and there was only one thing he could say.

"I love you Hannibal..." And if only it could stay that way. But then Will woke up.

Will jerked awake… panting he lift the sheet flushing in embarrassment as he felt the wetness between his legs, not only had he dreamt of being fucked by Hannibal but he had cum from it, he felt shame and arousal at the fact and looked over at the clock it was only six am, much earlier than he would usually wake so he climbed from the bed to take a shower before climbing back into bed.

Picking up the journal Will opened it to the first blank page, he decides to once again trust Hannibal, maybe that would help him to sort through his thoughts? But what if the Doctor didn't keep to his word and read it? He doesn't think the man would do that, but regardless Will picked up the pen because he has to do something.

'Where do I start? I shake my head violently. I grip my hair and pound my palms against my temples again and again when I'm alone, but my thoughts will not dislodge themselves. They are starting to drive me insane, they are taking away the inner peace I have worked so hard to build here, but yet I keep them deep inside, close to my heart and refuse to admit them to even myself… maybe that's why they won't leave? I want to make sense of my thoughts by way of talking but I also want to keep them tucked deep inside in the hopes that they will pass. They confuse and anger me, but yet they are my abiditory.

They are my worst enemies, yet my closest friends.

There was a time here that my thoughts became tormentors, a torture only escapable by sleep... which had become fleeting until I was given 'medication'. But now I am starting to realize that if I never reply, if I let them float by like a call unanswered they will never cease. At first they were the cruellest torture I had ever known, my entrapment and forced reckoning of myself consumed me, yet now they seem to have ebbed and one day, I'm not really sure when, but I noticed they were gone and replaced with happier, more comforting thoughts and feelings… just the noticing of that brought them back a little, but only a faint echo of what they had once been. They've been gone a long time now, those terrifying thoughts. My mind

is quiet, happy, and even healthy, well nearly… I have never had a healthy mind before. My thoughts are my abuser and just like any bully, they go away when I ignore them.

But like any ignorance, the initial trauma has to be replaced with a different thought, something that the mind can dwell on instead of a torture… and mine really have been replaced with a dwelling… that dwelling? Hannibal.

Hannibal visited me in a dream last night and it isn't the first time, it's torture, having him occupy all my thoughts not only in my waking life, but now in my unconscious mind too?? He doesn't even excuse himself for the night so I can sleep in peace. Still I guess it's my own mind telling me my deep desires, its telling me what I want, its telling me that I want him, I want our old relationship back, not this one containing an undercurrent of resentment. But seeing him in my dreams is only causing me more confusion.

Especially when they are dreams like last nights.

It's awful, seeing what I could have playing out right in front of me, it's what I want I know that... so why can't my conscious mind admit that? Why can't I say it out loud or put the action into play? Is it because I know that I should hate him? What Hannibal did to me wasn't right, he has taken away my freedom, he has taken away my right to choose what is best for myself… so why do I feel grateful for that? I have never been able to cope with my mind before, not like I can now anyway, and that's thanks to Hannibal…

In this storm that ravages my mind Hannibal is the gentle centre. Every person needs a harbour, a secure attachment of love and peace for without one we are in such pain, so lost, constantly shutting down. Then life becomes a torture we are expected to endure, we are surviving, not living and that's exactly what I was doing to myself by holding a grudge. It scares me to know that if it were it not for Hannibal there would be no relief, no emotional morphine. That man is my captor, my hero, and my heroin, of course I am addicted to him, but I'm not sure if that is for every reason that is pure and right. Well it was before coming here, but now I'm not so sure.

I do question sometimes if Hannibal really is my safety, or is he an anchor that I hold onto because I'm screwed up? Do I tether myself to him because I want to… or is it only a forced attraction now? I once read about a girl named Natascha Kampusch that was abducted and kept in a guy's basement for over ten years and she said that she loved her captor and everyone told her that she didn't, it was Stockholm and now I question if this is actually a reflective of that case?

And that's the problem isn't it? I am never going to know now if my feelings are voluntary, they were before coming here, but Hannibal added that confusing element and that will always make me mad. I have felt the brutal sting of abuse, rooms designed to torture my mind, and a hell of a lot more! All under the guise of help? That kind of torment should shatter all emotional bonds, but it hasn't severed the bond between me and Hannibal. My mind trusted him way before my nature ever could. In time I think I will heal because the affection is real help, Hannibal is irreverent, funny, real as hell and perfect with my idiosyncrasies.

I had my hand wrapped around the keys only days ago but I didn't even attempt to sit… I made an excuse of why I didn't grab for them, an excuse even I didn't believe. Last night's dream felt so real to me… I was walking down the solitude hall but it was awash with a thick fog and doors, I saw reflections that I wanted to run from but also wanted to run towards… I heard an orchestic music that told me the images were wanted, but I also heard rain and thunder very vaguely telling me to run.

I think the truth is that those feelings I had for Hannibal before coming here never really went, they were just masked by a thin veil of hatred, that hatred has passed now though and they have given way to how I truly feel. I kissed Hannibal, but it wasn't what I pictured… and now it's like I'm building up my courage to push it further. What if he doesn't want me?

In my dream I was intoxicated by Hannibal. Every touch of our bodies, every time he thrust into me it was ecstasy. Of course, he looked perfected, and all his handsome features were impeccably tuned. His stunning looks make me sulk further into my fantasies, I have considered taking my chances with him… but what if he doesn't want me like that? Hannibal became so flustered after I pressed my lips to his, and then even explained the next day that it was never his intentions when he brought me here and I believe that, truly I do.

I don't know how much longer I can deny my feelings for him, there is a familiarity with him, which makes him even more alluring, but I'm nervous… what if he rejects me?

There are times that I have to avert my gaze from his because I flush and get nervous. But when he looks away even for a moment that's my chance, it's my chance to gush internally over his chiselled jawline, his gorgeous hazel eyes and handsome attire and my gaze idled on him once again.

In the dream he held me close to his body, and I noticed how broad his chest was. I glared up into his sharp, hazel eyes and once again admired the structure of his exquisite face. Any flaw that exists in real life was erased, he looked akin to something Michelangelo would have carved into marble. We didn't speak, but it didn't feel uncomfortable. I was content being fully enveloped in the enchanting moment. Hannibal had freely put his hands on my waist, and I softly pulled on his nape, bringing his face closer to mine. I couldn't look away from his captivating eyes.

I felt a mystifying feeling of absolute safety and serenity in his arms. I was overwhelmed with different feelings, intense attraction, intense longing, intense excitement, intense adoration, the list goes on. We simply swayed there, our eyes locked. The look he showed me was one of otherworldly acceptance and joy. I remember his smell, just as alluring as every other one of his features. Sometimes I rested my head on his chest, and I heard the thumping of his heartbeat, and felt the security of his arms around me. It seemed to go on forever.

I'm so, so confused…

The heavy feeling arrives with little warning. One moment I'm feeling well, happy and hopeful but then it's like I am sinking in quicksand, it feels like my bones fill with rocks, my head fills with water, and I find myself curling into bed until they pass, the air almost too dense and my mind too murky to do anything but stare at the wall and hope that I don't cease to breathe. Maybe there is no reason. Maybe this is how it is. How it will always be. I've

never been able to sleep like I can now, but even with the constant presence of sleep I've never felt so tired. So tired yet so incapable of drifting off, as if my body is determined to keep me conscious, but only just. Awake, but only enough to exist. Not to think or feel or laugh or love or enjoy. It's an empty feeling unlike anything I have ever known.

My mind feels silent and that is the most unsettling of all. There has always been a running monologue of fears, paranoias, guilt, anxiety in all forms, swirling between my ears. But now the silence is all consuming, deafening in a way so profound that I almost can't remember what it was ever like to feel. And it's bizarre, the way I crave the noise. No matter the havoc it wreaked on my mind, it kept me company, reminded me that I was a person with a mind capable of thoughts. I can't bear to feel so numb anymore.

I want the noise back, I needs it back. I feel utterly hollow without it.

But I don't want my minds confusion back I want the noise that comes with Hannibal, with his presence the noise is calming and happy… I don't feel alone and worthless, I feel wanted and loved just like I had in the dream it was like everything fell into place and I was finally happy…

But then I woke up and the realization hit me immediately and hard. Hannibal wasn't there. The dream wasn't real, it didn't happen, but that doesn't change fundamental truths…

I am in love with Hannibal…

Closing the journal, Will set it back on the nightstand. Eyes flicking towards the digital clock and he huffed once realizing the time. It was nearly seven in the morning so it would be another hour before he is graced with Hannibal's presence.

Sighing, Will climbed from the bed and stood to stretch as a groan slipped through his lips, removing his glasses for a moment he pressed the palms of his hands against his face before shaking his head to clear his vision. Bumbling his way to the bathroom Will grabbed the litter box as Tera excitedly followed him around and he couldn't help but smile down at the excited animal, that happiness was soon stemmed though when he peered into the mirror that displayed the horrendous bags residing just below his eyes.

Will questions how he can possibly look so sleep deprived when the pills kept him out for over eight hours a night, he really did look terrible. Will cleaned out the box before moving to sit cross legged on the edge of the bed and pulled Tera up with him, he is about to pick up the tennis ball too but his attention is pulled when he hears the exit door open and the excited pup jumps from the bed to investigate the visitor. Will hears Hannibal greet Tera just before he appears in the bedroom doorway but the agent looks away instantly, he is unsure if the awkward remanence of the dream still lingering, or his exhausted state was the reason though.

"Your early."

"I wanted to see how you are feeling today, can I come in please?" Will nodded but gave no verbal response, it was a little disconcerting to see Hannibal out of context, wearing a red knitted sweater and loose pants as opposed to his usual immaculate attire, but to be truthful

the man would look exceptional in anything. Sitting beside Will on the bed Hannibal couldn't help but note that the agent looked tired, and still a little confused.

"You look a little tired Will, how did you sleep?"

"I slept fine, I know it doesn't look like it but I did… I don't really know why I look like hell."

"If I were to venture a guess Will it would probably be stress, is there anything special that you would like for breakfast?" Hannibal didn't push the issue, Will certainly didn't look eager to talk about anything so he won't push, hopefully the agent will open up when he is ready. Once again Will only answered the question with a shake of the head, his appetite wasn't exactly rife this morning but knows skipping meals isn't something Hannibal usually allows to happen, and he really didn't want any unnecessary aggravation.

"Anything is fine thank you."

"Ok, waffles it is." Will huffed out a small laugh at the offer of a treat for breakfast and appreciates Hannibal's efforts to cheer him up, he is also glad of the space he is been given right now as he wouldn't know where to begin explaining how he truly feels. "I will go and make breakfast, I won't be long." Hannibal offered up a small squeeze to the back of Will's neck and stood to leave but only made it to the bedroom door before Will spoke suddenly.

"No."

"I'm sorry, would you prefer something else?"

"No, waffles are fine… c-can I come with you?" Hannibal considered the request for only a moment, he paused in the doorway before turning back around so his mind had a few moments longer to prepare. Hannibal is hesitant because he needs to get this right first time, there are things in this situation that need to be that way, and the consequences of an error would forever haunt him. It's not that Hannibal didn't want this, it's what they have been working towards, but he's scared to mess it up because if Will behaves, that means regular trips downstairs could be on the cards and would take the agent out of a lonely existence, well a lonelier existence.

But if it's too soon and Will does something out of haste then it sends them back to square one and that would be devasting for both, its not that Hannibal thinks Will is planning something, it's that there is a possibility of it… but trust is what they have ultimately been working towards and they will never know if its there if opportunities like this one are never visited.

"Yes, you can." Will smiled at the trust he knows is being put into him in that moment, but Hannibal had no reason to worry, there were no ill intentions in the request, just a chance to leave these rooms for a while.

Walking down the stairs is just as daunting as it was the first time, it took everything Will had to avert his eyes when they passed the dining room, he didn't need that scene invading his thoughts again, and not right now, but pretty soon the kitchen came into view and Will

padded into it. As soon as Will sat at the kitchen isle it was like a flood of relief hit, Hannibal went back to fussing over a bowl of something that looked like dough and the agent raised from the stool a little to look over. Some of the gooey substance was balled up in several wells and placed on a baking tray but the flour appeared to be staging a takeover and coated almost every surface.

“What are you cooking?”

“Baking, technically, and scones.”

“You spilled a little flour over there.” Will couldn’t help but smirk when the man pursed his lips and already anticipated the coy response.

“Flour is very porous and light, it travels through the air exceptionally easy.”

“Why scones anyway? Aren’t scones a posh British food?” Will questioned playfully, his lips tilting slightly into a half mocking smile.

“You don’t approve of me baking scones?”

“Yes, I just don’t understand why you decided on scones? Why not muffins?”

“Muffins contain way too much sugar.” Hannibal smiled, well aware of the agent’s slight mocking of his food choice as he rolled dough into another ball and placed it onto the baking tray.

“Don’t scones contain sugar?”

“Not nearly as much as muffins no.”

“And aren’t they supposed to be round? Yours look more oval.”

“Did you just want to join me so that you could attack my culinary skills Will?” Hannibal peered up as his lips pursed, once again slightly wordless as Will openly mocked him, there wasn’t any complaint though... he really had missed the agent’s attitude.

“I’m not attacking your culinary skills, more your attempt at circles.”

“Well circular or oval, I am certain they will be edible.”

“I’m sure, I didn’t think that you would need a recipe card… I assumed you would know every meal and their ingredients by heart.”

“Recipes are nothing more than a set of step-by-step instructions that anyone could follow, I just don’t have the mental capacity to commit so many to memory.”

“Speaking of ingredients… do they contain ones for my palette or your own?” Once again Will smiled as he joked with the man.

“Don’t you trust me?”

“I am sure if I opened that refrigerator door I would find a severed organ staring back at me. So while I trust you with my life Hannibal, you really can’t fault me for not entirely trusting you with ingredients.”

Hannibal huffed out a laugh at Will’s comment. “I suppose that is fair. But I can assure you these are more to your taste than mine, and, if you are so good at circles then you can finish the last two whilst I move on to breakfast.” Smiling Will stood to move beside Hannibal, picking up the first piece of dough he molded it into the perfect circle followed by the second one, turning to smile at Hannibal as though he had just proved a point.

“Now what?”

“Hmmm… maybe the oven?” Will rolled his eyes at Hannibal’s sarcastic comment and moved to place the scones into the oven Will turned to close the door and jerked his hand back hard with a hiss when he hadn’t realised it was already pre-heated. “Ow!”

“Are you ok?” Hannibal closed the oven door and took Will’s wrist in his hand to observe the severity of the burn, it wasn’t too bad just a little red and he gently pushed the agent’s hand under the faucet and turned the cold tap on. “You may be better at shapes Will but I am clearly better with the equipment.” Hannibal couldn’t help his own mocking smile as he held Will’s fingers under the stream of water, thinking the whole time he’s a grown man who can do this himself, let go of him, yet he didn’t. “Better?” he asked, finally releasing Will’s wrist.

Will nodded and looked down at the small patch of red but it didn’t really hurt too bad, it was more an irritating throb than anything else, he blew on the mark for a moment, then held his hand out toward Hannibal when he pulled something from the cabinet and reached for his hand once more.

“What’s that?”

“Burn ointment it will stop it blistering.”

“How do you know?”

“I’m a Doctor Will that’s how I know. Don’t you trust me?” Will flashed another grin at Hannibal, he isn’t really sure why but he is enjoying sassing the man this morning.

“I trust you.” Will almost whispered, standing toe to toe with the man almost has the agent’s blush rising again, especially as he gently holds his hand, pressing a tissue against the burn to dry off the excess ointment. Will’s gaze rises to Hannibal’s eyes but upon the realisation that the man is staring back the eye contact faulters and he looks back at his own hand.

“Good. You should.” Hannibal smiled, he had seen and known the truth of those looks that had been coming more frequently lately for a long time now, even if he hadn’t been able to admit it to himself. Hannibal isn’t sure why but in that moment some of his resolve slipped and there seemed to be no reason not to do anything but what felt right, so placing down the tissue he slid a finger to tilt Will’s chin and pressed his lips to the agent’s.

Will stepped into it, allowing the man to turn him until his back was pushed flush against the counter and opened his mouth to deepen the kiss, just as Hannibal's tongue pressed against his own Will's body jerked following a loud knock on the door and Jack's urgent voice soon sounded out calling Hannibal's name…

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will finally give in to what they both want...

Will Jack's latest attempt at information offer any leads as to where Will has gone?

A huge thank you everyone and anyone still following this story! Especially to those who have taken the time to leave a kudo, comment and bookmark it has been appreciated! I hope the latest chapter is enjoyed and as always please let me know your thoughts!

Both men pulled back but didn't move, there was confidence in Hannibal but panic in Will. The Doctors confidence comes from knowing that this isn't a problem, and if it became one there are many ways he can eradicate it… there is however a curiosity, and that curiosity comes from the anticipation of Will's next move, will he run? Will he shout with everything he has? Or will he look to Hannibal for instruction?

Panic is biological, and there are two kinds. The first is a kind of intense worry that you could override if you wanted to, you can keep on functioning, but it is still chronic stress no matter how brief, it damages a person's body, their brain, it even alters the expression of hundreds of genes. It's bad, very bad… but the second kind is worse, because the second kind is when your brain is so bombarded by fear that a person's actions become erratic and escalate, and that is the panic Will feels right this moment.

In this grasp of immense panic some become a danger to themselves and others as they become incapacitated and unable to make any choices at all and when that takes over the brain fails to function in any normal fashion, just like right now. Will knows that if he makes a rash decision he is not only endangering himself at the hands of Hannibal but Jack too, surprise and panic isn't an emotion that Will has ever taken well. Generally someone gets hurt, because as an FBI agent the first reaction to a possible threat Will's gun is drawn, safety off, but now there is no gun, there is however a situation.

The blood drains from Will's skin and every movement becomes robotic, his training taking over, but it is quickly foregone so in that moment Will does the only thing that he can… he looks to Hannibal for a solution. When the knock comes again both men look towards the kitchen door, there is no way that Will can walk through it and back up the stairs without Jack spotting him through the glass panels of the door so the agent looks to his left instead, the only other door present that acts as an escape, and with absolutely no provocation from Hannibal he rushes through it and quietly closes the door behind him.

Will stands back against the door taking in shallow breaths, careful not to make a sound, but after a few seconds his curiosity is peaked and he presses his ear up against the wood, although through the thickness of the door the conversation being held in the next room was barely audible. Right now this was Will's chance, not only was it Jack behind that door, but freedom was too, the very thing that he had been craving for months now so why for a second time isn't he moving? Why is he standing here and letting the opportunity pass?

Will knows why… there is no hiding behind the uncertainty now, so he pulls his ear from the door and turns to survey the room he had spent so much time in during his therapy. The office slash library has numerous tall walls of ancient volumes, though mostly they are a sort of decoration to set the scene he guesses… or maybe not? It wouldn't surprise him to know that Hannibal had read every single book.

The bookcases with its inky treasures adorned the quiet room and each were carved by a person with a profound love of carpentry, upon closer look Will noticed that the engravings weren't ones of random patterns they were leaves, autumn berries, and birds in the nest… so sublime as to invite the fingers to take it in just as much as the eyes, although Will had been in this room, on those chairs countless times before he had just never really paid attention to the intimate details, probably because he was too busy attempting to reign in his mind.

The bookcases were made all the more beautiful by the smoothed bark on the edges. It brought nature into the home, a reminder that they were still part of the living world even in their temperature controlled home. Moving to the ladders Will climbs to the first level, walking in a slow circle of the balcony that overlooks the chairs that faced one another… a million conversations and feelings invaded at the sight, so many times had Will been sat in them spilling out his dire emotional state.

Those painful memories are much like the books that surround Will with chapters, some are deep and horrible and Will chooses to leave them on the shelf to gather dust, he knows that he can pick them up if he needs to learn something, to gain a perspective that helps him to create his own good story. With Hannibal's help Will knows that he can now use those negative chapters to re-see painful situations through a whole new lens if he needs to, but today, tomorrow and every tomorrow after that Will wants to choose what to write on those blank pages, instead of fear and trauma writing them for him… everything is easier now.

"Hello Jack, please come in, I wasn't expecting to see you today is everything ok?"

"Yes… well no, but maybe yes." Walking into the kitchen Jack is moving around the room like there's a hurricane inside of him, pacing back and forth, standing and sitting as the thoughts accelerate inside his head. His breaths come in ragged gasps and so do his words, there is a slew of incoherent sentences until he finally takes a few deep breaths to calm himself and sits on the stool at the kitchen island as Hannibal pours the man a coffee.

"There has been an update surrounding Will's disappearance, as you know we always photograph every inch of a potential crime scene, well I was looking over the pictures we initially took of Will's home and after paying another visit there this morning, I have noticed that his glasses are missing. They were originally placed on the table beside his lures but they are no longer there as of this morning."

“Do you have any theories as to why that is?”

“Yes, two as it happens and neither are positive, the first is my original assumption that Will may in fact have been abducted and the person holding him captive returned to collect them, or the second which is worse is the fact that Will came back for them himself, which means that yes he may of fled after my reaction to him contaminating a crime scene in a state of panic.” Hannibal has always disliked Jack on some primitive level, but that hatred only expanded and worsened after what he saw the man putting Will through all under the guise of catching a killer. But in that moment Hannibal actually detested the man, how could he possibly think the agent leaving of his own free will worse than abduction? The Doctor knows why, it’s because Will leaving of his own free will confirms that Jack is the reason for it which promotes a strong feeling of internal guilt… selfish, selfish, selfish.

“So you consider Will leaving of his own free will worse than abduction?”

“I know that sounds terrible Hannibal, truly I do… but no matter the reason I will not stop until he is found, I’m going back to his place tomorrow with an ultra-strength UV light, we don’t have one and the earliest we can get one is the morning. That piece of equipment will show us any new fingerprints as they are much brighter the less time they have been there, would you care to join?”

Just as intelligence and complexity are different, so are wisdom and kindness. It is wise to be kind, but not to give kindness to those that cause hurt and pain just as Jack had to Will, as offering kindness to the users allows them to create new victims with trauma. So Hannibal doesn’t offer up kind words to Jack, no he offers up confidence and no fear of the developing situation, it is wise to have the forethought, Hannibal had invoked that state to protect those who have done no wrong, in this case, Will… Jack’s investigation held no worries for him.

“Of course, anything that I can do to help.”

Will isn’t sure how much time passes before he hears the door open and Hannibal enters, but he doesn’t stop his slow pace, instead, his fingers move to trail the smooth wood of the banister as he walks. Looking down at Hannibal as he leans back against the desk, staring isn't quite the word for what Will does, though he'd fit the dictionary definition to a tee, his eyes rest, not unblinking but slowed… yet the effect is soft and inviting instead of harsh. Perhaps it is Will’s lips that give away his intention? They are not quite smiling, but tilting as if they mean to. As he continues the slow pace, Hannibal follows Will with his eyes only and a slight turn of the head, there is a curiosity of the agent’s current facial expression, it’s a new one from Will that Hannibal struggles to identify.

“You missed your opportunity to run, might I ask why?”

“Probably for the same reason that you allowed me to come downstairs Hannibal… or maybe it’s due to my newfound love of napping? In my time of isolation I worked on a rather wonderful Italian concept one you may know well, ‘the sweetness of doing nothing,’ and I'm proud to say that my nap technique has become a great skill… were you hoping that I would run?” Once again they have reached that place of profound dishonest conversation, the conversation in which nothing is admitted and nothing is confessed, instead, they have to look for the hidden meaning within the statements.

“Why would I hope that Will?”

“If I attempted to run, then maybe that might have given you just the excuse you needed to kill Jack…”

“What makes you think that I would want to harm Jack Will?”

“Because you don’t like him… you think he’s a coward, and you think that he uses people to make himself look good, no matter the impact it has on the person he is using… was the way he used me the final straw for you Hannibal? Did you really take me to save me, or did you do it so Jack has to live with the guilt for the rest of his life?”

“Why can’t it be both? Do you feel your own guilt for Jack’s guilt Will? Or do you derive some satisfaction from it after he nearly broke you?” Hannibal continued to watch as Will continued to pace, and thinks he may just know that look on the agent’s face, the coy smile, the calm demeanor, the indifference in his words all lead to one thing and that is self-honesty about his feelings of being here… it was a joy to see.

“Why can’t it be both?” Will’s half smile finally spread into a slight smirk at Hannibal’s question, as an empathetic person joy in another’s grief was never something that he had experienced, but with Jack, yes he did feel some satisfaction… so many times the man saw him suffering, struggling, but no, he was never pulled from the cases it was always just one more, it almost killed him.

“Do you feel saved Will?”

“I feel altered… you have isolated me for some time now… I can't see what little friends I did have, I can’t see my dogs or leave when I want to, I had so many panic attacks here at first, yet over time they grew further apart and eventually disappeared, just like my need of those mundane tasks. I have found a new joy in the little things and that was so very challenging, yet I grew strong. I would like to think that I am so much more psychologically mature, and I guess it was those brutal rooms that built me into who I am today, a new self has emerged.”

“Altered isn’t all that different from being saved Will, it’s just an easier way of saying it, and clearly as you didn’t run, it is something that you deem welcomed.”

Hannibal was a magician. Not the kind of man that can tell a person what their card was, or make roses appear from his sleeves. No, his magic was truly special, and so malevolent, his power was unique, and a really good one to have, he could bend and sculpture his words until people almost believed that they were breathing just because he allowed him to do so. Hannibal could make every reality into a favorable situation for him, making everybody else guilty for his every sin, and Will can’t shed that thought, he didn’t want to be a pawn to Hannibal, he wanted to matter to the man.

The problem was, Hannibal didn't use his powers for good things. Well, Will guesses they were good for him. But for the rest, and especially for him, these tricks only made him into the victim in his perfect story where he was the misunderstood hero waiting for a chance to

prove his worth. But Hannibal wasn't the bad guy, not really and not to him… or maybe he was? Will really didn't know anymore.

Hannibal had manipulated Will into believing so many things that now he doesn't know what's reality anymore. How could he be sure? Will trusted Hannibal with his life, and there were so many lies by this point that maybe he wouldn't be able to distinguish the truth even if it hit him like lightning. Those conversations, those words... how fucked up they left him, but if they stopped right now he would miss them because now Will find himself wishing to live in this strange place that is Hannibal's personal Wonderland forever, the thoughts of leaving are the ones that bring with it the grief.

Their conversations are always so much more than words. It is the smiles, the gentle shrugs and the light in their eyes, but what stands the most is that they are both elevated by each other's presence and even the silences are comfortable. They are moments to savor, in the company of the other each feel the sense of peace that comes from feeling loved and protected within the arms of a true connection.

Hannibal always listens as if Will's words are golden, perhaps some elixir he's been waiting all his days to hear, in his words are a kindness, an honesty that is so natural he cherishes it. This attentiveness is a part of who Hannibal is and if Will is honest with himself, it is the most attractive feature he had ever seen. They are the best conversations Will had ever had too, it flows with listening and intelligent responses… he guesses that's what happens when two loving people meet and connect like they have, that connection existed in its purity until Hannibal brought him here, and although there is an air of questioning the validity of those feelings now… they were still there.

Chatting with Hannibal was a sort of verbal dance, one beautifully chaotic, one that makes a person think so deeply that you can feel your heart switching on. It was banter Will guesses, but he lived for it with Hannibal, looked forward to it, and he would have spent any amount of time in Hannibal's company. They were funny together, intelligent, honest and open, but not so much with others...they just brought that sense of belonging out of one another and Will doesn't want to let that go.

"Why don't you come down for breakfast Will?"

Breakfast was eaten in comfort, the talk littered with smiles and that is the real communication, not the words. It told them of the love that lay there, unspoken, forbidden. It was as obvious as the morning sun, the feeling flowed through them as the conversation filled the air, and beneath the talk was the love, the gentle gaze of their eyes, the relaxed nature of their faces. Whatever they talked of never mattered, only that they were talking, connected.

Hannibal moved to clean up once every bite was consumed and allowed Will to help even after insisting repeatedly that it wasn't necessary, but still there was no enquiries about Jack's visit, something that Hannibal was glad of as revealing the purpose would only worry Will.

"Why don't you go upstairs? I have the morning free so we can decide what to do today?"

"Ok." Will pulled a small smile as he made his way back up the stairs without argument, he appreciated the trust even if it was something as small as going back upstairs alone. There

was no intention of anything as he walked back into his room and sat on the bed, it would be nice to spend the morning with Hannibal as being alone constantly was becoming a little lonely.

Hannibal soon followed and sat on the side of the bed, he had decided to spend the day with Will only that morning and didn't really know what they could do so he was certainly open to suggestions, he just prayed it wouldn't be another trip outside just yet as it was still quite cold out.

"So, is there anything in particular that you fancy doing today?" Will moved without really thinking about it, climbing into Hannibal's lap he cupped the smooth face and kissed him, he had nothing left to lose so why not? It was slow and slightly inexperienced as he has never really led before, not with a man anyway. But when he felt Hannibal's hands slide to his waist and pull him closer, his confidence level rose with a hitched breath.

That was it. Something deep inside of Hannibal snapped, and before he knew what he was doing he moved forward without hesitation, kissing back with equal need. Christ, he would never tire of kissing Will, he could spend an eternity just doing it… pulling the agent impossibly closer Will instantly surrendered to the kiss and he was achingly hard in an instant.

Hannibal grasped tightly to Will's slender hips, using his grasp to guide the agent as he began a grinding rhythm against his own aching erection and frantic lips moved to attack Will's neck in a kiss. This was never Hannibal's intention, it may have been before the abduction yes, but he knew the second he decided to take the agent against his will, he had forfeited all rights to that… however he can no longer stop himself.

Hannibal had never really been an affectionate person before but with Will it just felt different, he enjoyed the routine of kissing him on the cheek or temple, pulling him in for a hug when it seemed he needed one. Hannibal wanted Will, but he would never overstep the mark and push for something that he wasn't ready for, in truth he hadn't even been sure that Will looked at him that way in anything other than confusion.

But… apparently he does.

Will pressed forward and kissed Hannibal again, deeper this time, allowing the man to take control and unable to contain himself anymore, the Doctor moved to gently lay Will down against the pillows and pulls him into a deeper, passionate kiss as his hands work their way around the agent's body, his fingers trailing along Will's perfect physique.

"You don't have to do anything you don't want ok?"

Will nods, "I know."

"Have you ever? With a man?" Will offered up a slight shake of the head, but there was no hesitation when he pulled Hannibal back down into another searing kiss.

The sound of breath hitching slipped through the empty air as their lips parted between kisses, Hannibal's thumbs grazed the smooth stomach as his fingers popped the button of

Will's pants pulling them open and tugged down the zipper, and when there was no hint of uncertainty he moved to pull them and Will's underwear off too, discarding them beside the bed.

Hannibal pushed up the hem of Will's shirt and when the agent still didn't flinch, he pushed it the rest of the way off allowing his eyes to look down over the perfect porcelain flesh… with the shirt now forgotten on the floor with his pants, Will's body took on a slight blush as he laid bare beneath Hannibal, and the true panic started to settle in. The Doctor seemed to sense it, and quickly pulled off his own shirt and pants so the agent wouldn't feel so exposed and Hannibal dipped down to press a loving kiss to Will's lips again, hands gliding down the smooth sides.

"You are truly beautiful Will…" Hannibal's eyes filled with a predatory lust as he took in every inch of Will's perfectly chiselled figure, there was only one word to describe him, and that was perfect. His eyes were the perfect shade of blue and contained just the right amount of green, his lips were pink and plush and sat just below a perfectly aligned nose.

Will's dark brows were graceful, but currently furrowed in a nervous energy, and all of his immaculate facial features were framed by thick, warm dark curls, Hannibal's gaze travelled to the prominent jaw curved gracefully before eyes fell to the muscle that shaped Will's entire body, strong arms, bold thighs and calves, a firm chest and abdomen… to Hannibal he was a god carved from the finest of marble, moulded into an angel and sent down to earth to live amongst the filth of humanity, every other man just paled in comparison to his beauty.

For a long moment Hannibal is still, heart filling with a calm, powerful adoration as his fingertips caressed Will's cheek. In that moment of maintained eye contact a thousand words were spoken, every question was answered, and every intention clear. Moving forward again Hannibal finally closed the space and pressed an open mouthed kiss to the side of Will's neck, the primal desire has his body arching slightly, it has his hands descending further, curling his nails in the flesh of Will's hips and Hannibal almost groaned. There's just something about Will that lights him up from the inside, touching him is like being handed the holy grail, like his heart is mended even though he never knew it was broken.

"Please Hannibal..." The agonisingly slow touch is torturous, the man's fingertips are electric, they must be, for wherever they touch Will's skin tingles in a frenzy of static. Hannibal's hands venture even lower and Will's body has a moment of transitory paralysis, his mind unable to process the different sensations so fast.

Taking a nipple into his mouth Hannibal sucks lightly, smiling against the skin when Will's body jerks, eliciting a loud moan and the sound only has Hannibal sucking harder, feeling himself throb with every touch and taste of Will's skin, his hormones were beginning to shut down, his higher brain giving way to the rise of his animal self and from there on in it was all passion, intense, and intoxicating.

Will was Hannibal's release, his escape, his drug... his hands are light, fingertips gliding over the smooth skin and then he's licking and using his fingers all at once, watching Will's reactions, feeling how his legs begin to tremble when his lips explored, it only has Hannibal smiling wider when the agents body began to writhe under his touch.

When Hannibal's hands fall to his thighs Will's entire body jerked, knowing exactly where the Doctor's hands will soon reach, his head rocks back and another whine escapes his lips when a cool, slick hand wrapped itself around his length. When had Hannibal had the time to grab lube? Probably when he was too busy focusing on his inner panic, the question barely even sounded in his mind though, he was too fixated on the sparks of pleasure from the gentle strokes being offered to his cock, quickly coaxing Will to full hardness… he could touch himself a million times, but the feeling would never be the same as Hannibal doing it.

"Nng..." Will really wasn't used to being so naked, physically and emotionally but Hannibal seemed to sense it, allowing him to bury his face in the crook of his neck as he increased the speed of his hand, Hannibal understood the overwhelming feelings Will was feeling, and the only thing he cared about was making the agent's first time with a man a good experience.

Hannibal ducked his head to run his tongue over the now hard nipple, sucking gently as he moved his hand a little faster, relishing in the way Will cries out, the jerk of his hips, the needy moans. Will's mind and mouth may stream a litany of nervousness, but his body seems to crave the actions, it's in the way his legs tremble as Hannibal shifts along his body, the way his flesh quivers under his lips, the arching into the press of his tongue.

Will's cock was already dripping pre cum and Hannibal licked his lips at the sight, he glanced down to watch his hand as he stroked the agent faster, sliding pre cum over every inch of the now rock hard length and Will's eyes roll as he bucks into the tight grasp of Hannibal's skilled hand. The Doctor listened to Will pant and convulse, loving every orgasmic sound and every movement that came from him, Hannibal could feel himself growing harder, throbbing as he sped up the strokes for Will.

"Nnnghhh...." The longer and faster Hannibal stroked him, the closer he was coming to orgasm and he couldn't stop it, so when Will almost reached the point of no return Hannibal dropped his hands back to the agent's hips, not wanting him to finish that way and smiles at the almost disappointed whine Will utters.

Moving closer Hannibal is sure of himself, he's is in control, Will has no choice but to surrender completely as the man kisses down his body and he can't help but whine when feels Hannibal's breath teasingly over his cock for a few seconds. The Doctors tongue darts out, teasing the tip and groans at the taste before he slowly starts to pump his hand down the throbbing length throwing Will a truly malevolent glance before running his tongue over the now weeping head and suddenly, he's engulfed into Hannibal's warm, wet mouth.

"Hmmm!" Will's 's reaction is immediate, growling as he throws his head back, grasping at his own hair, biting back a loud groan when his eyes roll, his dick was pulsing and hard, throbbing harder when Hannibal's lips closed even tighter around him.

"AH! Hmmmm…" Hannibal allowed Will a moment to settle, letting the agent feel his eager tongue slicking against his cock before he was sucking more of him into his mouth and Hannibal continued to move, sinking lower he began to bob his head a little faster, his tongue circled around the tip as he sucked slightly, drawing more pleasure from Will's body.

With each buck into his mouth Hannibal swallowed harder, flattening his tongue to drag it along the bottom of the throbbing length, groaning when he tastes the agent's clean skin,

Will's personal taste was better than any food Hannibal had ever, and will ever consume.

Hannibal sinks down even further, not stopping until every inch of Will's cock rest against the back of his throat and he allowed a stifled groan to escape, chased by Will's own, the agent only whined louder when Hannibal's tongue switched from fast movement to laying lax on the floor of his mouth in a teasing action, the Doctor takes everything slow, enjoying the mewls of pleasure. Hannibal braced his hands behind Will's now trembling thighs holding him in place as he tentatively curls his tongue around the throbbing length to guide it further down his throat.

Hannibal sucked harder and Will couldn't do anything but writhe, his hips beginning to buck uncontrollably as pleasure pulled at his nerves, his breathing quickened when he felt Hannibal's throat close tighter around him, vibrating gently as he groaned. Hannibal ached at the noises Will made and before he was aware of making a conscious decision, his hands moved to touch himself, stroking in time with Will's shallow thrusts down his throat, working himself to the edge of his orgasm quickly.

Hannibal would have never guessed that having a cock down his throat would turn him on so much, but with Will nothing has ever felt so erotic, he smeared a glob of precum across the tip of his own swollen prick, squeezing and stroking as he felt that familiar tightness growing in the pit of his own stomach. When Will's hips began to buck uncontrollably Hannibal loosened his grasp of them and sucked harder, allowing the agent to fuck into his mouth and stroked himself faster when Will whined out, unable to hold back the groans of pleasure any longer.

Will couldn't hold back any longer, he was getting close and he can't stop himself, he could feel his orgasm building in the pit of his stomach and began rocking his hips faster, all resolve gone as he pushed himself further down Hannibal's throat, every inch of him shook and vibrated and he knew he was about to cum but Hannibal kept his mouth firmly on his cock and with one more suck and a wail of ecstasy, Will's head tipped back as far as the pillows would allow and screamed out when his entire body shook with the force of his release into Hannibal's awaiting mouth, a wave of euphoria dancing on every nerve ending.

Hannibal stilled, swallowing every drop he kept his head firmly in place as Will's hips continued a slow writhe with the aftershocks, allowing Will to ride out the last of his high before he finally let the softening appendage fall from his lips. Hannibal wasn't finished though, he wants Will excited again… if this was his first time with a man, then he was really going to make it count.

There was no refractory period offered, Hannibal simply smiled and shifted even further down the bed, looking at the pinkness displayed in front of him he leaned forward to place his tongue against Will's hole, gently licking at the sensitive rim. Will squealed slightly at the sudden sensation but didn't pull away, Hannibal knew it felt strange at first, but the pleasure that follows is worth it... he pulled back for only a moment before he flattened his tongue and pressed it against the whole mass. Will was hot against his tongue and Hannibal took a moment to enjoy the taste of him before he started to move his tongue faster, aware of how the roughness would feel against the tender skin beneath.

Will groans from the depths of his chest, his eyes falling shut as Hannibal's tongue moves harder against him, his legs shift, his thighs tensing before going slack and loose again. When Hannibal's tongue almost pushed inside him, slick and smooth, Will's entire body jerked and he tenses in a sudden rigor as the shock of pleasured sensations stalled every thought in his brain. It felt wrong, an intrusion in a place never meant for that, but at the same time he wanted more… needed more.

Will's body soon reacted and within minutes of the action he's hard across his abdomen once again, rolling from Hannibal's tongue, it's too much almost instantly as a slew of panicked, oversensitive groans follow when his body bucks into the sensation, it feels as if his lungs aren't there when he tries to bring air in, he can feel his muscles tense and strain as the thoughts in his head turn from fear to a dizzy confusion.

"HMMM!!" Hannibal's tongue firmly circled the loose muscles and he revelled in the movements Will made, the pleasured sounds now escaping the agent's lips sending heat straight to his own prick has him opening his mouth wider to gently suck over the whole area and Will cried out, his entire body beginning a rhythm of grinding down into each lick. Hannibal moves his tongue even faster, allowing Will's arousal to guide him, he revelled in the agent's movements, the sounds as Will convulsed under his mouth, curving and arching against the bed.

Hannibal can't resist the impulse to point his tongue and push into Will any longer, his cock throbbed at the constant slew of breathy little moans spilling from Will's lips and he revelled in how sweet the agent tasted. The tongue deep inside of Will curls and flexes as his entire body trembles, his hips beginning to buck uncontrollably as the penetrated tongue delves deeper inside forcing Hannibal hold them down. This just makes Will's body shake harder under the tight grasp, convulsing under Hannibal's mouth, he had no idea something could feel so good and for a moment Will can't breathe, his entire body writhes and he can hear himself moaning loudly but he can't quite bring himself to stop.

Will's hips rise up to meet each penetrating thrust of Hannibal's tongue, it was the sweetest shame he had ever experienced, Will's mind and body had etched beyond all caring when all he could feel was a blinding pleasured sensation… he was lost to it. Oh god, the heat, the feeling of Hannibal's tongue, he had never known pleasure like it before in his life, a slew of moans emanated from his lips mixing with the wet sounds that filled the room and Hannibal listens to him, revelling in the gorgeous noises Will is making as he began to grind down onto his tongue faster, seeking release.

"Please! HHMMMM!!" Will didn't know what he was pleading for, but he needed more… his back arched as Hannibal's tongue pressed in deeper, the feeling is intense, it drives a constant slew of moans from Will's throat as his legs begin to shake and tremble, but Hannibal just works his mouth faster, pressing his tongue in deeper, faster, groaning slightly as he did.

Will couldn't hold back any longer as the pleasure began to steadily rise once more, he was getting close for a second time and he can't stop himself, he could feel his orgasm building in the pit of his stomach and his entire body writhes as his eyes see nothing but sparks of white. Will began rocking his hips faster, pushing himself down onto Hannibal's tongue, every inch

of him shook and vibrated and he knew he was about to cum especially when the man started to push inside even deeper.

Hannibal pulls back when Will's hole begins to spasm around his tongue, he knows the agent is close and doesn't want him to finish like that a second time so moves to kiss back up Will's body and slams their lips together, forcing the agent to taste himself.

In that kiss was the sweetness of passion, a million loving thoughts condensed into a moment, Hannibal's kiss is not at all the same as those movie stars, but one steeped in a passion that ignites. It is the promise of realness, of the primal desire that lives in us all and with it he tells Will that he is awake this time, it's happening.

Pulling back Hannibal looked down at him with a lustrous gaze and Will bit his lip, the pensive look melts away into a soft smile and there is something about that gaze of Hannibal's that Will is never going to find in another man, as if in that moment their souls have built a bridge to step over past misdoings.

"Are you sure?"

"Y-yes…"

"I promise this will only hurt for a moment, and then it will feel good." Will gave a sharp nod as his head fell further back against the pillow, a small, panicked sound escaping his perfect lips in anticipation of what's to come. Will's hands fall to the man's shoulders as he braces himself for the pain, Hannibal's hands move to caress his ass, and when he feels a lube covered finger circle his hole he tensed slightly from the sudden contact and slight pressure, it was a strange feeling… but a good one.

"Relax Will." Carefully, a digit pushed itself inside, staying stiff and straightened to allow the walls around it to adjust. Hannibal was very attentively focusing on Will to gauge his reactions, ready to pull out at any sign of desire to stop. He heard the hiss hidden under Will's breath, but he was expecting that, so he pressed a kiss into the dark brown locks in front of him in an effort of distraction.

"AH! Nnngh!" Will grit his teeth hard and tried desperately to remain relaxed but couldn't help whining out in slight pain as the finger slowly breached him, the digit was slicked with lube, but it didn't go in easily and as Hannibal continued to push it felt slightly uncomfortable. Hannibal stilled for only a moment when Will cried out but soon, he felt more and more of the large intrusion sliding inside inch by inch and groaned loudly from the pain of been stretched.

"That's it Will keep breathing, it will feel much better soon..." Hannibal moved his finger slowly, allowing Will to adjust before a second was soon introduced alongside the first. They worked together, sliding in and out slowly, spreading slightly apart to stretch his tight walls open, and only when he is sure the agent is relaxed enough Hannibal curls them slightly, pressing dead on against Will's prostate and he watches intensely as Will's eyes roll at the sensation.

“Nng!” Will tilted his hips slightly, experimenting as he pushed down onto the gentle thrust of the man’s fingers and let out a longer moan this time when they hit that sensitive spot inside him again. Though in typical Will fashion, a heavy blush followed and he tried to hide his face in whatever way he could, but Hannibal didn’t allow it this time though and pulled back to expose him, his eyes locked to Will’s as he thrust his fingers in a little deeper.

“Ahh!” Hannibal’s fingers continue to work into that same spot, stroking it firmly with the pads of his fingers as he gently rocked them inside Will and revels in the escalating responses. The sheer intensity of the fingers deep inside of him takes Will by surprise and every single part of him pushed down onto it, he can’t help but moan out with every burst of white already blurring his vision, shaking and arching as his head falls back against the pillows.

Hannibal begins to move his fingers faster and the pleasure is instant, it’s almost too much to handle, the bliss of curling fingers has Will’s body jerking violently as the pleasure ebbs out of him, his thighs twitch and flex against Hannibal, his hips bucking desperately as his body thrusts forward with every jolt of pleasure.

Once again just as Will reached the precipice Hannibal pulled back and their lips connected in a kiss, only pulling away to ask one more time, “Are you sure?” Will nodded once again, grasping Hannibal’s hand that rested beside his head, locking their fingers together while the other hooked around the man’s lower back taking a deep breath as Hannibal lined his cock with Will’s entrance and slowly pressed inside.

Hannibal groaned as he slowly breached Will, despite being prepared carefully, the agent was still unbelievably tight, the firm walls clenched around him and Hannibal had to stop himself from thrusting into the tight heat too soon causing Will any pain. He paused, allowing Will to adjust, catching the slight hitch in his breath, Hannibal squeezed his hand tighter and pulled back slightly before slowly thrusting back in, deeper this time... “Oh! Hmmm!” A small whimper of pain erupted that turned into something else quite quickly, Hannibal pressed another kiss to Will's neck and pushed in all the way.

Hannibal started things off at a slow, leisurely pace, working his cock in and out amidst the sound of Will’s pleasured moans, the slight pain of the stretch is a little overwhelming, he’s full to bursting and spread wide around Hannibal’s huge length but with a tilt of his hips he sees sparks of white behind closed eyes.

Hannibal groans out, sighing at the tight heat as he languidly rolls his hips, he has Will exactly where he wants him now, content to take it slow. The drag of his cock, the feel of Will clenched around him is blissful and his thrusts were shallow at first, but quickly began building in depth and rhythm when the agent pulled him impossibly closer.

Will moaned louder as his hole stroked Hannibal’s cock, with every thrust he hit that sensitive spot deep inside him and the Doctor’s groans mingled with the agents in a way that turned him on to no end. Till the day he dies, Hannibal will never forget the ecstasy of those whines, or the way his cock looked stretching out Will’s hole, the agent’s vision blurred as Hannibal picked up the pace, wet slapping sounds filling the room as he began to fuck Will with reckless abandon.

Groaning loudly Hannibal dragged Will's body impossibly closer and finally in the perfect position he gave up some of his self-control and started to give Will a good fucking, slamming his hips forward hard he lost all sense of time in those tight muscled walls that squeezed him so damn hard, it took everything he had not to just nut after two or three thrusts. Hannibal's groans only got louder as he started fucking up into Will faster, nails cutting into the pale hips as he grunted loudly, nearing his high.

"Hannibal close!" Hannibal moved his hips faster, harder, spurred by the whimpers and cries of ecstasy leaving Will's perfect lips as they neared that edge together. "I'm gonn-" Will doesn't finish his sentence before he arches off the bed screaming out as he comes, painting both chests a pearly white but Hannibal doesn't stop fucking into him.

"Please Hannibal! I can't!" Will's breath shudders and his toes curl as Hannibal continues to fuck into his oversensitive hole, whining because there's little else he can do with the man's body pinning his legs open and Hannibal begins thrusting into him relentlessly, it's overwhelming in every way but Hannibal is too engulfed in chasing his own orgasm to stop, he fucks into Will harder, faster, eliciting a loud whine as the agent twitches below him even harder.

The Doctor moves at a brutal pace, he's so close… Will weeps, his hips bucking as he's forced to chase his third orgasm. "Ahh!" The overstimulation brings tears to Will's eyes, but it feels euphoric and pretty soon the high pitched whines turn to a low growl as Will arches off the bed and comes for a third time, screaming out before his entire body goes limp and Hannibal thrusts into him a few more times before grunting out as he came deep inside Will.

Hannibal stilled as both pant to catch their breath, resting their foreheads together the Doctor presses a deep kiss to Will's lips before rolling over and landing next to him on the bed, after only a moment, Hannibal pulls Will closer to his chest, which the agent uses as a pillow and hears the words he hadn't known he had been longing for.

"I love you Hannibal."

"I love you too Will…"

Within moments Will is asleep, allowing Hannibal to just look at him and even after everything that just happened the agent still looks so pure and innocent, and pretty soon Hannibal follows suit and slips into a deep comfortable sleep. Only an hour passes until the man stirs and the first thing he feels is Will's body heat as he's snuggled up even closer, his head rested comfortably against the broad chest, the memories of what happened quickly comes rushing back to Hannibal and he almost feels himself stirring at the thought.

Carefully and quietly Hannibal untangles himself from grasping arms and moves to dress, not quietly enough though as Will wakes and sits looking slightly disappointed at the man's departure.

"Where are you going?" Sitting back beside Will on the bed Hannibal strokes a hand through the mused locks and pulls the agent into a warm embrace.

"I have an appointment but I promise I won't be gone long ok?"

“Ok.” Still Will looked a little disappointed but understands that Hannibal has things he needs to do so accepted the hug and didn’t complain as the man moved to finish dressing.

“I will be back soon ok?” Hannibal offers up one more kiss before leaving the room and Will takes a few moments to shed himself of the remaining sleep before climbing from the bed to place on his glasses and underwear, sitting on the side of the bed he smiles as he reaches down to ruffle Tera’s fur, laughing when she offers up a playful bark.

“Go get your ball! Get it girl!” Will smiles again as the small animal runs to find the ball, but when he stands he doesn’t realize the rapid speed in which Tera returns, and as he takes a step the excited animal leaps out in front of him only giving Will a moment to avoid stepping on her, but the reaction was far too slow as he stumbles.

The next moment plays out in slow motion as Will falls, he feels his head connect hard with the nightstand smashing a lens and gashing his forehead. As he hit the ground Will’s eyesight blurred and everything became fuzzy until he saw nothing at all, his consciousness began to ebb and float through an empty space filled with a thick static… throughout the inky space his heartbeat pounds loudly, echoing in his ears, alongside fading pleas for help.

Until all feeling in his body drained away until finally, all was black.

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Will's minor accident begins a chain of events that could change everything...

An honest conversation is finally had between Hannibal and Jack!

I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone and anyone still following this story! Especially as I took such a long break, it has been so much fun to read and I do hope that everyone enjoys the conclusion! (This isn't the last chapter) as always I hope the latest chapter is enjoyed and please let me know your thoughts!

Hannibal drove to the psychiatric ward with a smile on his face, this would possibly be the last visit with Abigail meaning the entire design would finally come together and there is nothing that sates him more in this world than a completed maze, well, that and Will's happiness. There is no hiding the fact that yes Hannibal is apprehensive, about many things about to transpire but this had to be done, it had been a while since Abigail was given the news that Will was missing or possibly taken and Hannibal knows that she is clinging to the hope the agent had left of his own accord, because if that was the case then he could return, but that thought came with some grief.

When Jack had confided to Hannibal that he would 'prefer' it if Will had in fact being taken as opposed to leaving the Doctors blood had boiled, the only reason Jack had wanted that latter outcome was to absolve him of his guilt, taken meant it hadn't been his fault… repulsive really. Now Abigail on the other hand really didn't know what to think, if their last visit together was anything to go by she couldn't call it either way, she seemed to comfort herself with the notion that Will was in fact just taking some time away and would come back in his own time, but that self-indulgence of false hope just wouldn't fit the design.

Hannibal's visit centred around giving her the latest news, news he really shouldn't be divulging to anyone, but its what's needed to start the proverbial ball rolling… he had never really been overly thrilled about how close Abigail and Will were, they seemed to form a special bond with each other and that bond they shared only seemed to grow stronger as time went on… and that just wouldn't do, because Will needs to let go of every aspect of his past life if the next part of the design was to work out.

Love and hate are from the same part of the brain, and so those who never developed a healthy capacity for letting go can become the prisoners of revenge, Hannibal has never liked the word revenge it was more manipulating things to how they should be… and things are slowly becoming that way, but in this design there was no room for Abigail in Will's world, only him. Yes, there will be substantial emotional and mental trauma caused to the girl with this visit, even more so than she has already sustained, but unfortunately, it's just necessary.

Callous is the call of the emotionally cold and indifferent, to act as if the emotional reality and pains of others is of no consequence, and in this case it isn't. Abigail's pain of loosing Will is only going to be collateral damage... damage that Hannibal is also looking forward to seeing because as soon as that grief hits, the bond is severed.

A psychiatric ward was once called an asylum, yet it is no place to seek asylum, not the true meaning of the word anyway. It should be a place of refuge from the storms that hurt the mind, a place of love and sanctuary, but it's not. In truth, the asylum would have been more aptly named as a house of torture, for the removal of any hope, the bare walls and bare floors are a more accurate reflection of what that place really was.

Abigail was sitting on the edge of the bed seemingly in deep thought when Hannibal knocked on the door and he received the usual smile, but there was also that reflex action of checking for Will and then the flit of disappointment when the realisation hits.

"Hello Abigail, how are you feeling?"

"I've been better, but I have certainly been worse… I haven't seen you for a while I was worried our sessions had ended."

"I'm sorry Abigail I have been extremely busy in assisting Jack lately, it is one of the reasons I am here actually. I am afraid I have some bad news."

"What's happened?"

"Well, as you are aware Will is still currently missing, I am unsure if you are aware of this but when a crime scene is first investigated it is photographed, just as Will's home was. Well very recently Jack paid another visit to re-examine the scene against the photographs taken and it appears that someone has returned to Will's home to collect his glasses, and at this stage it is being thought that it was Will himself… I apologise for being so brunt about the situation but I thought it best you knew."

"So you and Jack think that Will returned for them himself?"

"Jack is leaning more toward that outcome yes, and I myself believe that is the more likely option."

"You don't seem too worried about it?" Abigail picked up on a nonchalant vibe in Hannibal's voice and she internally questioned if the man knew more information than he was letting on as he certainly had information about her own actions that he kept quiet.

"As I said to Jack, I only worry about things I can control."

"So he really did just leave everything behind… even me."

"There could be a number of things that Will was running from, we cannot speculate on anything for certain."

"Once again it feels like you are holding something back Hannibal?"

“I am not intentionally holding anything back from you Abigail, I am just worried the facts may confirm something that is already deeply upsetting you.”

“I would rather know the facts Hannibal.”

“Ok, yes the FBI have considered that Will may have been taken by the Chesapeake ripper, but after a more thorough investigation there are many more details leading to the fact that Will has left by his own choice without much thought to those he left behind. There was no blood found at his home after his disappearance, which would be expected during an abduction, especially as Will’s dogs would have defended him, his car was also missing and now so are his glasses.” Walking around the grounds of the psychiatric ward was just as depressing as the inside, Abigail tried to process the latest bit of upsetting news while still trying to process everything else.

“But the car was found burnt out.”

“The FBI seem to think that was a ploy on Will’s behalf, or even an unrelated theft.”

“Will wouldn’t just leave without coming to see me… he cares about me.” There was a time Abigail was angry at the universe for introducing her to Will in the way that it did, only for it to then so cruelly take the agent far away, they had become so close and her hatred for the loss of her father turned into an appreciation of Will for taking that monster out of her life… she had found her peace with it and once again it had been taken.

The grief of missing Will comes in waves, little ones at first until they are so strong Abigail feels swept away. They come at such random moments, replacing a feeling of normalcy with those familiar tears…. yet in time those waves lessen and that paves the way to let the good memories flood in instead, they allow for waves of smiles and warmth, those funny or sweet things that were said to her by the agent bring the hope that he will come back for her.

But Hannibal never seemed to be wrong, and right now he was telling her that Will doesn’t care about the people he left behind and he isn’t coming back…

“I must admit that I also had similar thoughts, Will and I became quite close. However, I had spoken to Will the evening before he disappeared and his mind seemed extremely scattered, he spoke about feeling burdened with many things in his life, and that feeling was becoming overwhelming to him.”

“So I was the burden?”

“I cannot say for sure what Will felt was a burden in his life Abigail, I can only hope that he will find peace in whatever he chooses to do.” Hannibal could have answered that so differently, he could have offered up the love and support needed in that moment and persuaded the girl that no, she wasn’t and never had been the burden in Will’s life because he knows that to be true, but setting off a chain of events cannot be done with hearts and flowers.

“The last time I saw Will he told me that he would always be there for me, he even suggested I come and stay with him when I get out of here… maybe that thought became too much?”

“For people on the spectrum like Will, sometimes running is easier than reigning on a promise that is made in haste, anxiety always wins.”

“I can’t believe he would just leave me like that, the thought breaks my heart because I really thought that he cared about me… I have nobody now.” There is a feeling of emotional safety in learning how to rely on herself, but Abigail finds it so hard to do so… and while she knows that she will miss the agent without measure, that is what she needed to achieve, she needs to let go and move on just like Will had done.

“Having nothing and nobody can sometimes be a blessing Abigail, it gives you a blank canvas to be whoever you want.” Hannibal slipped an arm around Abigail, pulling her into a tight albeit brief hug when he saw her working so hard to stem the tears that wanted to fall.

“Broken hearted is not a destination Abigail, yet a difficult road that often appears at a person’s feet and unfortunately that road must be walked in order to gain a better future. We can pad our shoes with good memories to absorb the shock, or let our soles feel the full pain of this change in our lives and at times we alternate between the two. As the days become months and years, the good memories will keep us walking with ease, and then we are ready to love again, to feel healthy and well… the here and now is just an exceptionally bad phase of your life Abigail, one that you will survive.”

“Are you going to leave too?”

“Not right away Abigail no, but I feel it necessary to be honest with you about the fact that I will be taking a step back from my practice as my stay in Wolf Trap was only supposed to be temporary, so once I have helped you transition to your new life, whatever that may be, I will be considering moving away.” Grief has a way of removing a person from the world and it takes a real strength to reconnect and weave yourself anew into the fabric of living, to give yourself a chance of future happiness… but now Will has gone, and it seems that Hannibal will be following close behind, the two men that Abigail thought would be her rocks are just abandoning her and it’s almost too much.

Hannibal and Abigail spent the next visiting hour talking before he excused himself to see his next ‘patient’ but assured the worried girl he would be back for their next visit. Seeing the girl distraught about Will’s departure and Hannibal’s impending one was like winning a war that Abigail wasn’t even aware of, he derived some satisfaction from destroying the bond the pair had because Will didn’t need anyone but him. Was it harsh? Yes, but it was also necessary for the rest of the design to fall into place, however Hannibal just didn’t know how quick that would come, and when unexpected things transpire, they are much harder to control.

On the drive home Hannibal made a stop, he had felt beyond guilty that he had to leave right after being so intimate with Will but his prior arrangement had been an important one, so the only thing he could do to try and convey his apology was to do what most do when they are in the proverbial doghouse… buy him a gift.

Calling into the store Hannibal passed every candy isle until he made it to the fruit and veg, most people would consider a sweet treat as a gift but knowing Will the way he does Hannibal guesses that wouldn’t be as well received as what he had in mind. In the seventies

and eighties grapes were actually considered a treat, that's where the notion of taking them to visit patients in hospitals came from but Hannibal guesses that's not so easy to imagine nowadays though. Especially in western supermarket stores, it seems that processed and sugar filled products took precedent over everything else, including a person's health… well to everyone expect Will.

The agent had never really seemed a sweet toothed kind of guy, when Will opted for food or snacks it was usually fruit, so Hannibal couldn't really think of anything better. Upon arriving home Hannibal moved to start dinner but paused the action when he realised this was another opportunity for the agent to spend some time downstairs with him, so walking upstairs Hannibal didn't knock when he walked into Will's bedroom as he didn't want to disturb the agent if he was sleeping… his relaxed state seems to be providing much of that outlet lately.

But what Hannibal is greeted with upon his entrance sent a rapid wave of crippling fear throughout his core. Will was laid on his back unconscious, his glasses smashed, his face swollen, and the blood that had seeped from the small cut just below his hair line had now dried telling the Doctor that Will had been in this position for a while.

"Will!?" Falling to his knees Hannibal's first instinct was to check for a pulse and the relief was immense as Will began to stir from his touch instantly with a groan.

Will's eyes only fluttered for a moment though before falling back closed, his head was pounding, his vision was an array of gray and black spots coupled with the constant ringing in his ears that would not stop. He opened his eyes again, unsure of when he had closed them and blinked once, twice, three times before he could make sense of his current position and once again they fell closed.

Will knew that he was on the floor, he knew that Hannibal was hovering over him, his features contorted by worry... but the agent doesn't remember why. "Where...am I?" Will slurred, his tongue felt heavy and his words left his mouth like syrup, and only winced harder when Hannibal's voice once again assaulted his ears.

Hannibal's voice was too loud, or seemed to be… everything was too loud.

Waking up feels hard and confusing, there is more pain to his head than Will ever thought possible both physically, and mentally when he tried to remember exactly what had happened and it's a dual exertion that he isn't sure he can deal with. "Will?" The voice sounds familiar but it takes a few seconds until he truly remembers exactly who it belongs to, Will winced when he felt Hannibal stroke his face, even the lightness of his touch is painful and when he tried to sit up, the world felt like it was turning upside down.

"Will can you hear me?" Hannibal asked, quieter this time, but began to panic slightly when Will didn't respond, instead the agent raised a hand to the dull ache across the side of his head to try and rub the soreness away but it did nothing.

When Will's fingers brushed the thick cut protruding from beneath his hairline things started to trickle back… he soon felt a soft hand grasp his own to move it away from the injured area though.

“Try not to move Will.” The voice came in echo’s, soothing and scary at the same time.

The next thing that registered was his eye lid been pulled up followed by a blinding light being shone directly into his eye. “Will can you hear me?” Hannibal’s voice seemed to be getting more concerned by the minute as he cupped both Will’s cheeks in a desperate attempt to make eye contact, but Will couldn’t focus on anything right now, nor could he talk, his throat was dry and he began to wonder exactly how long he had been out.

Hannibal really began to panic when Will didn’t focus, there didn’t appear to be any real recognition and the speech was non-existent, he asked again for the fifth time but still there didn’t seem to be an acknowledgment of his words. “Do you know where you are Will?”

“Yes… I need to sit up.” Will’s entire body ached from the vertical position against the solid ground and guesses he has been in it for a while, his attempt to sit up is thwarted by a gentle push from Hannibal though who continued his invasive checks.

Hannibal used his grasp on Will’s cheeks and very slowly moved the agent’s head from side to side ensuring there had been no damage done to his neck before his fingers rose up to check the cut, it was quite small but also pretty deep, so there is a possibility of stitches being needed. There was no vomit surrounding Will which indicates no sign of a fractured skull, at most there may be some concussion, but if that’s the worst of it then good.

“I need to sit up…” The relief in Hannibal was instant, Will was not only talking but seemingly moving around with no issue, but until he has had the opportunity to examine Will properly Hannibal pulls the agent into a fireman’s lift and lays him on the bed, not allowing him to stand unaided and urged him to stay still, but within seconds though Will wins the fight and sits himself up, massaging his temple in an effort to stem the pain but it does nothing.

“Stay here for a moment please Will.” Hannibal stands and leaves to retrieve the first aid kit and Will descends into panic, what if the Doctor takes Tera away because he fell over her? Would the man consider her a danger going forward? Will racks his mind in a desperate attempt to think up an excuse as to why he fell but nothing has sprung to mind by the time Hannibal returns.

“I-I’m sorry.” The slight huff of a laugh that Hannibal offers up is quite soothing.

“Will, you have nothing to apologise for ok? What happened?” Hannibal takes a moment to caress Will’s cheek, trying but failing to decipher the panicked look on the agent’s face, he couldn’t quite understand why Will looked as though he were about to burst into floods of tears. “Will… it’s ok, nothing is wrong, you just need to tell me what happened.”

“I-I just lost my footing.” Hannibal notes Will’s eyes flit from the pup back to his own fingers and pieces together exactly what has happened, and now realises exactly where the fear is coming from.

“Did you fall over Tera?”

“It was my fault… it won’t happen again, I promise I will be more careful... please don’t ta-” Will’s sentence was cut short as he was pulled into a calming embrace, he sunk into the warmth of Hannibal’s chest and breathed a little easier when the man began to stroke at his back as he spoke softly.

“Accidents happen ok? You don’t ever have to apologize for them Will… is Tera ok?”

“Yes… I think so, she seems to be.”

“Good, as long as you are both ok then that is all that matters… Will, you don’t ever have to be afraid to tell me anything.” Hannibal held the agent for a little longer, soothing his hand through the mused locks until he felt Will’s breathing begin to calm and only then did he let the agent pull back. “I’m just going to take a look ok?” Will offered up a nod and allowed Hannibal to pull away, but was grateful for the soft kiss pressed to his cheek first.

Using a sterile wipe Hannibal was able to clean away the blood and inspect the injury in a little more detail, offering up a smile to Will when it really wasn’t as bad as he initially thought. Once the injury was appropriately cleaned Hannibal held up his finger and smiled when Will was able to follow it with no issue and finally the Doctor felt around the bone and was relieved when nothing felt broken or fractured.

“Ok, how are you feeling Will? Do you feel nauseas? Or dizzy?” Hannibal sat close to Will on the bed and ran a gentle finger down the now bruised and swollen face before his hand moved to gently clasp the agent’s uninjured cheek and the Doctor couldn’t help but smile when Will moved forward for another hug.

“A little sore but I’m ok… I don’t feel sick, just a little dizzy. Did you do what you needed to?”

“Yes I did, a little dizziness is perfectly normal, you may have a slight concussion and we are going to need to stitch up that wound ok?”

“No. No please Hannibal… I don’t want any stitches.” Hannibal was familiar with Will’s aversion to the needles and guesses that he can probably use fabric compression stitches to hold it closed, but if it doesn’t begin to heal in the next couple of days then stitching it is.

“Ok, I will patch it up, but if it doesn’t show signs of healing alone in the next forty eight hours then we will have to consider stitches ok?”

“Ok…” Will was grateful for the man’s second option and remained still as he was patched up.

“Ok, all done… nearly as good as new! I am about to start lunch now, would you like to join me? As I don’t want you falling asleep with this Injury.”

“Yes.” There was no hesitation when Will took Hannibal’s hand and stood from the bed to follow him downstairs, but the man did pause for a second.

“Bring your glasses ok? I will take them to the opticians and get you a new pair made.” Slipping them into his pocket Will took his usual stool in the kitchen and watched as Hannibal gathered together the ingredients for lunch, a soft smile played on his face as he soaked in the slight domestic feel of their time together, being outside of the top floor was all Will dreamt of at one point, all he had to do was be this close to the exit and he would fight to the death to reach it... that had been the plan but now, even the thought of using that door was incomprehensible.

“Here, I got you these…” Handing over the grapes Will took the bag with a smile and didn’t hesitate to pop one in his mouth.

“You got me grapes?”

“A gift is the normal social convention when you have wronged somebody that you care about, and I didn’t think that you would prefer candy over them, I do hope that I made the right call.” There was something more than generous in Hannibal’s gift that showed his thoughtful nature, yes the Doctor had been correct in the fact that Will really would prefer the fruit over candy and that just tells him that Hannibal has paid attention to who he is as a person… but what had he done wrong?

“How did you wrong me?” Will huffed out a laugh as he popped another grape into his mouth, the man seemed to take on that air of shyness once more, there was something cute about Hannibal when he became nervous, and that wasn’t a word that Will ever thought he would use with the man.

“I left immediately after being intimate with you and that was indecent of me.” Will smiled wider at the man’s confession of his ‘wrong’ for Hannibal that was less than tame but yes, it did bother Will a little that the man basically screwed him and left… he appreciated not only the apology, but the acknowledgment of it.

“I forgive you… I may even let you make it up to me…”

“I would be honored to.” A smile and heavy comfortable silence settled over the two but so did appreciation in Will, perhaps it was that Hannibal could so easily see things from the perspectives of others that made it easy for him to say the right things, or maybe the man just noticed his feelings and needs? Either way Will didn’t care, the simple gift and the apology meant the world to him.

“Thank you for my grapes…”

“You are very welcome Will.” Placing the glasses down on the kitchen island Will continued to munch on the sweet gift with a sated smile until the noise came.

It wasn’t just a knock at the door that came, it was a pounding as though a swat team were about to bust it open. The sudden aggression of the noise has Will jolting, jolting in his body, jolting from the stool, jolting to his feet… the panicked look is aimed straight at Hannibal who remained still in his placid demeanor. Will froze to the spot, waiting, he is waiting for the comforting words he is unsure Hannibal can offer in that moment, but in the man’s usual fashion he does.

“It’s ok Will.” Will doesn’t hesitate to disappear through the same door he did the first time that Jack had called unexpectedly and sat behind it once more. There are thoughts of long term when he does, Hannibal is finally letting him come downstairs but how would this work going forward? What if they weren’t in the kitchen next time? Will he have to spend his life hiding every time that someone decides to pay Hannibal a visit?

Walking to the door the pounding comes again, it’s rude in its essence and confusing all the same. Hannibal knows it’s Jack, and he knows the man is here to discuss his earlier visit with Abigail and what was said, but that wasn’t supposed to happen for a couple more days. Because in two days’ time Alana has her visit with Abigail, it is at that point the girl would tell Alana what was said and that would filter through to Jack… it’s too early.

“Hello Jack, please come in.” Before the offer of entrance was even made the man had stormed through the door and into his kitchen, it was a rude action that Hannibal didn’t appreciate and had to calm himself before following behind, but he is sure there will be an opportunity of pay back for it.

“So! Abigail called Alana today… what the hell were you thinking Hannibal!? You not only gave Abigail CLASSIFIED information, but you explicitly told her that Will had vanished of his own free will?? And because of her?? Abandoned her and everyone else!?”

“I in no way expressed to Abigail that Will had left because of her, I said that it was most likely Will had left of his own choice because certain circumstances and situations had become overwhelming. But yes I gave her information that Will’s glasses had been removed from the scene and likely by himself.”

“WHY!?”

“Would you rather I told her that Will had likely been abducted by the Chesapeake ripper? That there is no hope of his safety or return? What do you think that would have done to a girl with a mind as vulnerable as Abigail’s?”

“So false hope is better!?”

“In this instance I believe so yes. We do not know where Will is and I always find it prudent to hope for the best in a situation like this Jack.” Jack was rage incarnate, not really stemming from the girl’s grief but for the fact that Hannibal had gave her classified information about Will’s glasses being removed from the scene.

“You gave a girl speaking regularly with Freddie Lound’s classified information Hannibal.”

“Yes that may have been a mistake on my part Jack and for that I sincerely apologize, but I in no way told Abigail that she was a burden to Will, in fact I told her the opposite.”

“Abigail’s feelings are not what matter to me Hannibal, as harsh as that sounds she is not my concern, the information is! I have informed Alana that she is to visit Abigail again today and express that information is to go no further, so now I am telling you Hannibal. There is to be no more confidential information given to Abigail, is that understood?”

“Of course, I apologise Jack, my intentions were pure and I only divulged that information to stem an already grief stricken girls feelings… it was not my intention to overstep any boundaries.” Will could here bouts of shouting that fell to conversations, before the air of anger rose again, but he could barely make out the words… and pressing his ear to the door felt in some way invasive to Hannibal.

Jack dropped into the stool at the kitchen island and huffed out a loud sigh, yes he understood why Hannibal had done what he had but it didn’t make it right. Taking a few moments to calm himself Jack massaged his own face with the palm of his hands, breathing slow before taking on a calm tone with his friend once more.

“I understand why you did it Hannibal, really I do, but we can’t just give out that type of information to unstable people that has a journalised on call.”

“I agree with you, and you have my word that it will never happen again. Coffee?”

“Please Hannibal.” One can live an eternity in a single moment, the doors of every unanswered question swings open wide to reveal the answer. And so there is a realisation that lives in that slow passing moment, a realisation of everything that you once questioned and that’s exactly what happened to Jack when his eyes flitted to the side and saw Will’s shattered glasses sat in front of the sugar container.

Everything went on pause, Jack picks up the glasses and stands, but too slowly to be normal. When Hannibal turns to place the cups on the island he is greeted with the full realities of the situation. Everything is analyzed in that moment, but the only conclusion he reaches that truly matters, is Will didn’t leave them there intentionally.

Jack tries to speak, he glares at Hannibal with nothing less than hatred but his voice trails slowly, like his words are unwilling to take flight. There is an anger in his eyes, the whites overly present and in that moment, in that coy smile that exudes in Hannibal’s facial features, Jack realised he had misinterpreted the Doctor’s actions, his words, his expressions for so long... as if he'd been speaking a language that he couldn't understand...

“Where is he Hannibal?” The question was barely a whisper, as if Jack was trying to remember how to add a vocal tone to his voice and when he found it, it only got louder. “WHERE IS HE HANNIBAL!?” Will made out the words of the last shout, his curiosity had gotten the better of him and with his ear pressed to the wood the agent’s face dropped when he patted his pocket and soon realised that he had left his shattered glasses on top of the island for all to see.

Will dare not move, not even to breathe, he was frozen to the spot when he heard Jack’s demand again. The agent can feel his heart pounding in his chest as though it were trying to break free and when the silence comes again, the hairs on Will’s arms stand to attention as a militia of chills march down his spine. The beating gets louder when he hears nothing more said, a cacophonous thrumming rhythm is the only thing that emanates and the sound is intolerable, Will’s breathes turn to pants that only get deeper by the second… he has no clue what to do, this is it, Hannibal has been caught and now they were going to take the man away from him

Maybe he could convince Jack that he was here of his own free will? That he had begged Hannibal to let him stay and not say a word about it? Or maybe the Doctor could make up an excuse as to why his glasses were there? If anyone could, Hannibal could. But what does he do right now? Does he stay hidden or walk out to face the music? The thoughts are accelerating inside Will's head, he wants them to slow so he can breathe but they won't, instead his breaths continue to come in gasps and he feels like he will black out.

Will's heart is hammering and the room spins as he squats on the floor, trying to make everything slow to something his brain and body can cope with… he feels so sick that all he wants to do is call for Hannibal, but instead he whines incessantly into the skin of his own arms wrapped around his knees.

Jack's gun was drawn before Hannibal could even react and within seconds he had the Doctor pulled back against him as he rifled for his handcuffs, but when Will stood and stumbled against the door a slight sound emanated from the thickened wood and mistakenly Jack's eyes followed the sound.

Hannibal took the slight distraction to slam the back of his head hard into Jack's nose, the crunch was sickening enough to knock him and the gun backwards onto the ground although it only took seconds for Jack to find his feet and stand without the weapon as it slid away from his grasp, but it was soon replaced with a knife that was pulled from the stand on the island.

Blood gushed with determination from Jack's nose, as if his own heart sought to pump it from his body, momentarily it was clasped in his callused fingers as the knife was held up with the second but it did little to stem the flow and for a moment, there was stillness on both sides and if hatred was visible, the air would have been scarlet… and then suddenly movement, so much force in every blow.

Hannibal lurched forward at the same time as Jack did and threw his entire body weight behind the fist that connected with Jacks jaw, the force of the blow pooled blood into his mouth as pain erupted from the point of impact, upon realising Hannibal had just dislodged a few of his teeth Jack stepped back when Hannibal swung again, but lunged forward fast as the Doctor turned.

Ploughing into Hannibal's stomach with brute force knocked the pair into the coffee table that collapsed, smashing to pieces as the glass shattered, it was like hitting a train head on. Hannibal's guts smashed together, blood vessels bursting but he managed to rise up and headbutt Jack throwing the man from the top of him and climbed to his feet.

Hannibal brushed his hair back and gave a slight shake of his head, taking a moment to catch his breath as the second man attempted to find his feet. "You need to work on your anticipation Jack, it is your only downfall."

The second Jack stood up dazed, Hannibal moved forward using both hands to grasp his head and brought his knee up hard, ushering yet another blunt crack as Jack's nose completely shattered. Hannibal released the man and kicked out hard at the centre of the elder agent's chest, sending him stumbling backwards into the door that hid Will. Using it as leverage Jack pushed back against the wood and lurched forward to tackle Hannibal hard into the kitchen

island, taking advantage of the man's momentary instability he grasped the Doctor's hair and threw three violent punches into his face before Hannibal once again brought his knee up violently against Jack's abdomen.

For a brief second the pair stumbled apart to come down from the daze of impact, before diving back at one another, their eyes narrowed in determination.

Hannibal dodged each fist and wrapped his arm around Jack's neck from behind as he turned, for a brief instant the man's eyes widened before he managed to push his foot against the wall sending them both backwards to the ground once more and Jack threw his head back hard, slamming it into Hannibal's nose. Stars burst the Doctor's vision as Jack scrambled to his feet in an attempt to grab the discarded knife but Hannibal saw the intended action and turned swiftly on the ground using his leg to swipe Jack's feet from underneath him sending him back down with force, all actions stopping for a second when his head hit the tile with a sickening crack.

Rolling away from one another the two men panted before rising on unsteady feet, both swayed on the spot as they tried to make the room stop spinning. "You may want to consider a career change Jack, Will has been under your nose this entire time and you couldn't figure that out... but then, you couldn't even figure out the love of your life was severely ill, and wanted to die. Do you know why that is? Because your self-obsession outweighs everything in your life."

"YOU SON OF A BITCH!!" Jack turned and grabbed a knife at the same time Hannibal grabbed a fireplace poker… there was a moment of nothing but vicious eye contact, nothing but hatred in those angered orbs as they circled each other slowly, daring the other to make a move.

"Is that all you've got Hannibal? A bitch punch and faux words!? Did Will figure out what type of person you were? Did you silence him… outsmarted by him? Did it make you feel powerful to kill him? Someone so much weaker than you?" Jack crowed, smirking infuriatingly.

"Will is stronger than anything I have ever known, you are a coward Jack, and the worst kind." Hannibal threw himself forward as determination and anger took over, swinging the poker as Jack dodged each one, backed into a wall the man swung again but moved out of the way at the last minute as did Hannibal, it was the wrong move on the Doctor's part.

A sudden gush of pain jolted throughout Hannibal's abdomen when Jack swiped the knife, his stomach ached, his arms lost tension and his legs began to weaken when he felt the knife slice his stomach with a reasonable amount of depth. At first the blood gushed thick and strong, flowing through his fingers as they clasped at the ripped open wound, his hands became slick with blood before it oozed further and splattered onto the floor.

Hannibal instinctively grabbed his stomach and was hit in the temple hard with the handle of the knife hard with Jack's swing, falling backwards he rolled on to his back in time to grab the fireplace poker at both ends, holding it up as Jack lunged down with the knife in a stabbing motion, holding the position Hannibal felt his arms go weak and brought his leg up to Jack's groin hard giving him a momentary lapse to push the elder agent from above him.

Both lay side by side rigid, paralysed as a winded man is, but neither would let it be seen, with all their will they prevented themselves from gasping, only through parted lips did they draw in rapid gasps, before they rolled away from each other once more to climb onto swaying steps, Hannibal placed a steadying hand on the wall as Jack used the island for stability, he used a foot to nudge to shattered pieces of furniture in a desperate attempt to find the gun but panicked when he couldn't find it.

Jack really hadn't thought the elder Doctor would have this much fight in him, discreetly he looked around for the unseen weapon as he anticipated the next attack he isn't sure he can defend himself from, he is not only tired, but he is injured too and badly, but so is Hannibal.

"Tell me Jack, why have you been so overly obsessed with finding Will? Is it so the guilt you feel over his disappearance dissipates? Would you have apologised to him? Or was it simply so you could be the hero upon finding him? I am genuinely curious." Hannibal breathed out his words in ragged pants as he stood slightly hunched, inhaling deeply in an attempt to catch his breath, smiling as he did.

"I clearly have nothing to feel guilty about! Will didn't flee, he was abducted." Jack's words weren't much more coherent than Hannibal's, he remained propped up by the island as he also attempted to slow his breathing.

"Just because Will didn't flee by choice that doesn't mean you have nothing to feel guilty about Jack, you destroyed him, you placed him on case after case until his mind could no longer take it. Will was days away from a full breakdown and that was evident after he contaminated his last crime scene, but still you didn't stop pushing him did you Jack? You continued to push him to find the ripper so you could be the hero… Will was nothing more than collateral damage in your mission to become a hero among the FBI, to me he is much more... I saved him." Hannibal smiled as he mocked the unsteady man and revelled in delight when he saw the guilt in Jack's eyes at his true words.

"WHERE IS HE!?" Grabbing a nearby lamp Jack tossed it from the stand and Hannibal dodges when it almost hits, he ducks his head and turns back to see the fragile china based lamp shattered all across the floor after it had bounced from the wall.

Anger surged at the rude act, he liked that lamp.

Jack pants, spitting blood, he can barely see through the sweat in his eyes and the swelling from that last hit, his cheekbone is hot with pain and he works his jaw carefully, aside from a few missing teeth nothing seems broken. Pulling a knife from the stand Hannibal takes advantage of the distraction and throws it with as much force as a throwing dart and the blade sinks deep into Jack's arm earning him a pained yell, it stemmed him from reacting too quickly when Hannibal moved to jump over the counter with the second knife pulled from the stand.

"AARRGGHHH!!" Pulling the knife from his arm releases a fountain of blood, but that doesn't slow him down. When Hannibal steps forward and swipes the knife Jack steps back, when he swings again he ducks and steps behind the tilted table giving himself a moment to figure out his next plan of attack.

They maintain eye contact as they hold up their respective blades, circling each other faster than a shark circles its prey, knowing the elder agent is tiring Hannibal lurches forward and kicks the small table hard at Jack's legs and swipes again but his attempt is thwarted when his blade connects with Jack's.

Will is moving about the office as though there is a hurricane inside of him, he's moving like his brain is demanding the energetic expenditure of an athlete but won't tell his limbs what to do. The agent's eyes are wild and threatening to leak tears in the midst of his panic, he switches from sitting and rocking until he explodes into motion again and moves around the room. Suddenly Will is talking, talking to himself like he doesn't have enough time to say what he needs to…. his words are crowded together and some are missing as he tries desperately to come up with an excuse of his presence here and why Hannibal is innocent, but nothing comes.

Will's sentences are fragmented and his thoughts seem to jump from one thing to another as he breaks out into an uncontrolled panting sob, all his fears are tumbling out unchecked by his brain like he's in some kind of mental free-fall, unable to analyze things or assess the current situation... he doesn't want Hannibal taken away from him.

"I will freely admit that you can hold your own Jack, but you lack anticipation… and planning. This is a fight that you are not going to win."

Jack charged at Hannibal who was already braced for the attack. As both men swung vigorously, the blades collided together with every swing and the air was rent with clashing steel. Each narrowly dodged the sharpened blades and when Jack turned his head, Hannibal kicked out hard knocking him back against the counter, another kick to his chest winded the man who dropped the blade in favor of grasping his now broken ribs.

Stalling wasn't an option though as they were both losing steam fast, Jack lunged again and Hannibal caught him in a headlock before bringing his knee up violently to the man's abdomen, Jack tried hard to pull away from the tight grip but after one more knee to the stomach Hannibal swung him and kicked out hard once more sending Jack backwards through the plate glass door.

The glass erupted as Jack landed hard on his back, a thousand tiny shards slicing open the skin of his back, Hannibal turned his head and cracked his neck before throwing the blade on the ground and walked up the bloody mess on the floor that had been his adversary. Jack was grotesque, already his eyes were swollen over and bloody spit drooled from his slack jaws. He was now as revolting as he should be, finally the outside reflects the man within. It was tempting for Hannibal to whisper something in his ear, that he was broken and he had won, but what was the point? That much was obvious.

Hannibal simply smiled down at the man laid in a pool of his own grotesque fluids before walking forward to pulled him up and turn the weak frame working an arm into a tight grip around his neck from behind. Jack slammed both elbows back into the man's ribs repeatedly, trying in vain to get loose from the tight hold, Hannibal has to give him his dues, Jack was a fierce fighter. Pulling him slightly Hannibal moves to stand in front of the same mirror Jack held him in front of only minutes ago, he watches with a smile as Jack chokes desperately in his grip.

Bringing his hands up, Jack desperately tried to pull Hannibal's arm from around his throat, he kicks out and struggles when the lack of oxygen becomes painful, but it only takes a couple of moments for him to stop, his kicks getting weaker. Jack's hands went from pulling to only holding on to the one wrapped around his throat, his mouth opened to choke in wheezy breaths, his lips forming words that are unintelligible like this, but his eyes said everything that needed to be said as they were nothing but orbs of pure fear.

Hannibal simply watched the pathetic struggling, he watched as Jack's kicking slowed, staring intently at his reflection as he tries one last time to pull the grasp from around his throat, but Hannibal only squeezed tighter and smiled with every word Jack attempted to mumble out, the Doctor knows how easy it would be to snuff out the man's life. As he holds his arm tight he hopes that Jack realizes it too, how fragile he truly is right now, how his life belongs in his hands.

Hannibal keeps squeezing, waiting for the light to fade in Jack's eyes.

Jack tries his best to glare at Hannibal through the haze building around the corners of his vision, blacking out everything. Tears have built and he does his best to hold them back, but it's impossible. It doesn't take long for all of his movements to stop and Jack breathlessly tries to plead with Hannibal, his hands still scrabbling pathetically up until the last moment until they give out and fall to his sides, eyes closing too peacefully for how much he struggled to stay conscious. Hannibal kept his grip for a few more moments after that. Then, he lets Jack's body drop to the floor.

Hannibal once again brushes his hair back and gives a slight shake of the head, widening and closing his eyes a few times in an attempt to shift the haze and finally logical thinking kicked back in, there was still no sound from behind the office door and Hannibal takes a moment to appreciate Will's intelligence as stepping out would have done no good. It also clarifies to him that Will is his in his entirety, body soul and mind, because if he truly wanted away from him then the agent would have made himself known and fought with Jack for his freedom.

Hannibal smiled at the thought, brushing himself off with a newfound internal happiness but turning away from Jack's unconscious form was his only downfall, he didn't hear Jack rouse, and he didn't notice the man fish for the gun that had slid under the kitchen island. There was no way he expected the man to stand, as it was near impossible that he would regain consciousness that fast, but quietly Jack rose to his feet and fired a warning shot just above the Doctor's head.

Will yelps when he hears the shot. The panic starts out as a thin sheen, something his fingers can pierce breathing holes in but within another minute the panic is a deluge of ice water surrounding every limb, creeping higher until it passes his mouth and nose. Hannibal's dead. Gone… he must be! Jack's shot him, he's hurt. he's bleeding. Hannibal needs him and he isn't there, Will wants to hold his hand, he mustn't die alone… he needs to call someone. Call the police. Call an ambulance! He's hurt…. he's bleeding out and no-one knows.

An invisible hand clasps over Will's mouth as an equally ghostly hypodermic of adrenaline pierces his heart, unloading in an instant, he feels his ribs heaving as if bound by ropes, straining to inflate his lungs. Will's head is a carousel of fears spinning out of control, each

one pushing his mind into blackness and all he wants to do is run but he needs to freeze… it's now or never, so he steps forward and grasps the doorknob.

Hannibal turned slowly, making eye contact with Jack's dead stare and the smug smile that tells him he thinks he has won the war, but the Doctor doesn't flinch, he doesn't back down or step back, just matches Jack's smile.

"I am going to ask you one last time Hannibal. WHERE IS HE!?" The next few seconds played out in slow motion as Jack aimed the gun at point blank range, his breathing too heavy to be normal and covers the sound of Will opening the door but Hannibal's gaze doesn't faulter from Jack's, he gives the man no time to react as the Doctor sees what the young agent grasps from the island.

"J-jack…" Jack's eye's go wide before he turns to face the voice he has longed to hear for quite some time now, slowly as though turning wouldn't reveal the agent, just reveal the voice was imaginary to his desperate mind… but there Will stands.

"Will."

"I-I'm sorry Jack." Without a moment's hesitation, Will swings the rolling pin hard against the man's temple propelling him backward Jack landed on the ground with a thud and once again the man slumped unconscious.

Will's breath hitches as he looks down to see the thick river of blood now making a steady stream from beneath the unconscious Jack's head and his only instinct is to look to Hannibal for instruction, for comfort… anything to stem that tumbling despair he feels in the pit of his stomach.

"Come to me Will…" Hannibal extends a hand to the distraught agent with a smile and pulls Will into a hug when there isn't a moments hesitation in crossing the war zoned kitchen. For several sweet moments Will doesn't have to hide behind a mask, not of bravery, not of coping, he could display his honest fear and relief that Hannibal was the one standing and not Jack.

"Congratulations Will… you have completed the final room."

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT THE LAST CHAPTER

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

Will is scared of the repercussions for what he did to Jack, he doesn't know if Hannibal can save him from this one!

Please note this isn't the last chapter there is one more after this so I hope that people enjoy the outcome!

A really big thank you to everyone and anyone still following this story to the end! Especially to those who have left a comment, kudo, and bookmark the support has been amazing and it has been so much fun to write!

Please let me know your thoughts!

“W-what are we going to do?” There is the hug of gentle arms that still gives the space to breathe and those strong arms tell Will one thing, that everything is going to be ok. In that moment of feeling Hannibal so close to him he feels awake somehow, more alive than he has been in so very long. In that embrace everything that had, or ever would scare Will seemed to fade away, everything in his life that had become too much dissipated and finally he felt safe within these walls, with this man, he felt protected… and now Jack has taken that all away from him.

“I want you to go upstairs please Will, I will be up shortly.”

“I-I killed him… I-I didn’t mean to! I… I… I.”

“Will, breathe… just breathe for me.” The panic he was released from in Hannibal’s arms only rises again when he looks back over at Jack, the lack of air drives Will to start gasping, panting breaths as if the oxygen had suddenly been sucked from the air around him, Hannibal can protect him from many things, but the man can’t protect him from this.

“I-I’m going to prison… I d-didn’t mean to-” It now feels as though his lungs aren't there when he tries desperately to bring air in, as soon as Hannibal moves to pull away from the hug the panic just intensifies and Will feels his muscles straining, the thoughts in his head turn from fear to a dizzy confusion so he does the only thing he can in that moment, listens to Hannibal.

“Will, look at me… just breathe, I am not going to let anything happen, you just have to trust me.” Hannibal clasped Will’s cheeks, resting their foreheads together as he inhaled deeply, keeping the hold until Will somewhat matched the rhythm of his breathing.

Grasping Hannibal's arms Will tried to match the pattern but it was near impossible, he didn't mean to hit Jack as hard as he had, really he didn't. All that swims in his mind is what he had done, and the repercussions of that fact like going to prison, losing Hannibal… losing Tera, because it really wouldn't take people long to figure out where Jack was, he had come here screaming so Will guesses someone else knows why and there isn't a calming thought to turn to, so Will listens to the man and walks upstairs.

Once inside Will paces the entire length of the upstairs, moving from room to room as tight fists knotted into his now unruly hair, his breaths come out in ragged gasps as he tries desperately to maintain a rhythm other than panting but he is too aware of his teeth chattering together, and the tears blurring his vision. After a while Will finally sinks to the floor in the hallway, unconsciously rocking back and forth hard enough to wrench his back… everything is a blur of fear, what is going to happen? What will he lose? It's too much, too much, too much-

Will's head filled with rushed thoughts, the speed takes away the chance of analysis, and they instead seem to collide with the walls of his skull in a barrage of painful throbbing, his body shook as he willed himself to sit into the tight corner of the walls. The closest resemblance to stability he had available to him in that moment, but the coldness of the walls offered little comfort, what if Hannibal doesn't come upstairs? What if he is already long gone? He's not coming back… he has left! Tears pricked the corners of Will's eyes as he closed them and silently willed the man to come upstairs, praying to hear the sound of those oh so comforting footsteps.

Looking around the war torn kitchen Hannibal couldn't help the small smile that slowly spread across his features, both the mess and Jack's form represents everything that he had ever wanted, Will hadn't fought with the man for his freedom, no, he had fought against the elder him and that in itself was a major relief because yes, on some level Hannibal had to assume Will's behavior was a ploy, even at this late stage.

Crouching down beside Jack, Hannibal truly was unsure at this moment as to whether or not Jack was unconscious or was in fact dead, Will had hit him relatively hard and in an extremely delicate spot, so even the Doctor held his breath as he pressed his fingers forward in search of a pulse. Hannibal doesn't want Jack to be dead, he doesn't want the empathetic Will to live with the knowledge that he had killed someone that didn't deserve to die… yes there may also be ulterior motives for him wanting Jack alive because that all fits into the next part of the plan, but if he is dead, then it doesn't really change anything either.

There is an instant relief in Hannibal when he feels the familiar thump of a pulse, and he has no intentions to end it. Instead, the Doctor places a hand under each arm and drags the heavy set man into the basement to secure Jack with his own cuffs to a heavy duty iron pipe before walking back up to the kitchen, and Hannibal takes a few moments to clean himself up before pulling aside his shirt to assess the deep gash splayed across his abdomen. A bandage is used for now, it needs stitching but the bleeding has stemmed for now and there are more important things to attend to in this moment such as the panicked Will.

Walking to the top floor Hannibal's gut fills with both fear and excitement for what's to come, this is what the past six months has all been leading to, Will is finally in the right place

to make his final decisions and although Hannibal hopes for the best, he has also prepared himself for the latter outcome. The Doctor paused in the doorway to the bedroom, letting his eyes roam the room before a panicked Will even acknowledged his presence, Hannibal would have to go in eventually, he knew that, but at least this way his mind had a few moments longer to prepare.

Hannibal only hesitates because he needs to get this conversation right the first time, there are things in life that are that way, and the consequences of an error would forever haunt him. Will is doubled over on the bed, sitting and rocking with tight arms grasped around his knees close to his chest as though he were trying to protect himself, its only when Hannibal takes another step that Will acknowledges him.

"Will…" A familiar voice says, though Will can't quite put a name to it just yet as he just hears Jack's voice, but this one sounds worried. "Focus on me ok? Breathe for me." It only takes a moment for Will to realise that it's Hannibal seated beside him, but it takes him a little longer to acknowledge being scooped into the Doctor's lap and once again he is embraced in tight arms.

"That's it Will… keep breathing." Hannibal's soft voice encourages, as equally soft fingers gently untangle Will's fingers from his own hair.

The roar of silence in the room is loud. Entirely too loud. There is nothing but the sound of static, it seems to blare in Will's eardrums, it screams and bellows around him to join in with the unsettling chorus of his own heartbeat… his chest is tightening, the sensation of his lungs being wrung of oxygen causes his heart to leap in fear and it terrifies him. The panic doesn't descend though, instead it crawled through his limbs, wrapping its paralyzing tendrils around him in a vice grip so tight it felt so hard to even move, it's far too difficult to yank his thoughts from the closing cage of terror even when wrapped in Hannibal's arms this time.

"Can you hear me Will?" Within the frantic fog he could recognize the voice calling to him. It was filled with genuine concern, deep and warm as it pierced through the buzzing in his ears and slowly started to bring him back into reality. "I have you Will, I'm here… you are safe." Hannibal only tightened his hold, embracing the trembling agent firmly as he nestled further into his chest.

Soon that is all Will is aware of, Hannibal's warmth… had he always been this warm? In the man's embrace he could finally feel his body's tremors begin to cease, the familiar feeling grounding him further. Leaning further into the man's chest he finally took a deep breath, holding it for a moment before exhaling slowly, matching Hannibal as he continued a deep breathing rhythm of his own, encouraging Will's to slow as he stroked the agent's back in soothing circles.

Slowly, the rushing and fearful pangs in his chest began to fade, filling with the calming warmth that he could feel flooding into him from Hannibal's body, but every time he attempted to speak that tightness would return.

"I need you to listen to me now Will, Jack is not dead, he is merely unconscious." Upon those words there is a relief in Will unlike anything that he had ever felt before, but Jack being

alive didn't really solve anything other than the guilt he would have endured for his lifetime upon killing an innocent man… all it does is raise further worries.

"W-what am I going to do Hannibal!?"

"Will, I wish that I could say this doesn't change anything but it does, it changes everything."

"I know… I shouldn't have left my glasses there! I can't believe I did that it was so stupid… but I swear it was an accident and now I have gotten you into trouble, b-but I could just say that I left of my own free will and b-begged you not to tell anyone where I was."

"Unfortunately Will when this comes out that won't be believed, I will also be in a lot of trouble for my attack on Jack and there are clear signs of abduction such as this entire floor. Do you remember the first day I brought you here? I told you that all I ever wanted was your happiness Will, and I meant that, you also said to me that people would figure it out and one day you would be found, and I responded with my awareness of that fact… do you remember that?"

"Y-yes." Will did remember both of those conversations, and at the time he didn't believe either, he didn't believe that all Hannibal wanted was his happiness because if that had been the case the man wouldn't have abducted him and subjected him to such barbarity. As it turned out though he was wrong, everything Hannibal had done was for the benefit of both his mental, and physical health, and yes, he was happier in his own mind now than he had ever been… he knew what Hannibal had done was wrong, but Will forgives him, and that should be his choice nobody else's.

But no he didn't believe the second aspect of what Hannibal had said, that someday someone would find him and save him… for a long time he thought he would be trapped there forever, but that fear slowly changed over time, been found was no longer a rescue in Will's mind, it would be devastating because he would be taken away from Hannibal and he still stands by that now, he doesn't want separation from the Doctor… he isn't sure he could survive it.

"As I hope you can understand, I would prefer not to spend the rest of my life behind bars Will, and when this comes out it will not take the FBI long to figure everything else out. My intentions of bringing you here was your happiness in the long term, and I knew once that was achieved I would have to leave… but this gives you options now Will, you have choices… and I will support what ever you decide to do."

"S-so you are just going to leave me?" Lifting himself out of Hannibal's lap Will sat beside the man, wiping away his tears, the fear once again rose at the information that Hannibal was leaving, that it had always been his intentions… understandable? Yes, heart breaking? Excruciatingly so.

"No, I did not mean it like that, you have an option to take your life back in this moment Will, all you have to say to the police and FBI is exactly what happened to you, your attacking Jack will be perceived as Stockholm syndrome, your actions will be understood and forgiven. At that point you face no charges and you are free to live your life as you did before, if you decide to make that choice all I ask is that you give me a couple of days to prepare and leave."

“You said I have options… plural.”

“Yes you do, you can also walk out of this house right now and contact who you need to, bestow whatever punishment you deem I deserve, or you can choose to come with me. Regardless of your decision Will, it has to be just that, your decision… I cannot make it for you, but I want you to know that I will support you no matter what.”

For a moment Will’s heart aches, he wanted Hannibal to want him, he wanted the man to ask him to go with him but he also understands why he didn’t, the Doctor couldn’t. Asking him would in some way be swaying his decision and Will understands that, Hannibal is giving him choice, options, but most of all he is keeping the promises he has made since the start of all this ‘when you are ready you will be free’ and here it is, Hannibal is making good on a promise Will never thought he would because apparently, he’s ready now.

Will doesn’t want to return to his old life, he isn’t sure how he could, he doesn’t want to leave this house and call the cops, and he doesn’t want Hannibal to run without him either, but he also doesn’t want to be a burden and leave with a man that doesn’t want him.

“D-do you want me to leave with you?” Humans are a far more sensitive animal than current culture suggests, for we evolved our emotional intellect to keep us together as families and communities. Our ancestors survived because of their deep feelings and their ability to read emotional cues in others who loved and defended one another… and right now Will is reading the situation as he is unwanted by Hannibal.

“I want you to make the choice Will nobody else.” Occasionally a weakened soul will emotionally appoint the ones they love to certain positions in their inner landscapes, there is a reliance on that person, a trust, a full surrender for that person to know what is best for them and Hannibal had created that position in Will’s life, and up until now the agent hadn’t realized how much he had needed that.

But at times that weakened soul can create their own disappointments, Will has to let his logic take over here, of course Hannibal wants Will with him, always, he just can’t sway the agent’s choice. Psychological maturity is perhaps shown more keenly in the way we deal with disappointment than almost any other emotion and Hannibal can see nothing but the disappointment in Will’s demeanor, it has arrived as a sadness. It is a grief for Will because he is allowing his emotions to see this as an ending, yet with thought, deep thought about the entire situation as a whole it will pass and pave the way for his soul to realise they have something real, lasting, and secure.

“My job is to remain your steady arms as long as you need them Will, to keep you safe, to nurture and protect your soul until you are capable of making these kinds of decisions yourself… and if you never are… I will never let go of you.”

“I-I just want you to want me with you… but it feels like you don’t.” When Hannibal stands and moves to a deep drawer that has always been locked in the room Will’s heart almost breaks, the man can’t even say that he wants him, that he wants them to be together, so how can he ask to leave with Hannibal? But as it turns out sometimes actions really do speak louder than words.

Sitting back beside Will Hannibal hands over a passport, but the color is different and so is the nationality stamp. Its upon opening it that Will realises the man's true intentions, there in black and white is a name, a date of birth, and every other section of required information… but they don't belong to Will, that's his picture yes, but the information was far from factual, clearly it was a fraudulent document.

So as it turns out Hannibal had always intended to extend that offer… he just really did want it to be Will's choice.

Doing the right thing usually costs rather than pays, but it sure does bring health to the heart. Of all the things in Will's life that hold a lasting significance nothing compared to this moment, he is no saint, no hero either, but Will has always had integrity and honor, but as it turns out so does Hannibal. The man has kept every promise made so perhaps Will had got it wrong, maybe this is their chance to rewind and have another go... Will offered up a hint of a smile, there was no hesitation anymore, he wants them to leave, together.

"It is my choice… and I want to leave with you, but only if I am welcome."

"I always want you with me Will." In Hannibal's embrace the world stopped still on its axis. There was no time, no worry, no fear… Will's mind was simply at peace. How could it be that he hadn't seen Hannibal's love for what it was before? Pure. Unselfish. Undemanding. Free.

Will felt his body press against Hannibal's, soft and warm. This was the love he had waited for, prayed for, and he inwardly thanked God as he hugged the man a little tighter, a love like this was to be cherished for life because finally, he was home. The two sat together for a while, but once again Hannibal knows that he has to leave Will, only for a short while but it was a while too long before he had even left, he really hadn't expected things to reach its peak so quick and arrangements not only have to be made, but the ones already made need pulling forward.

"W-what about Jack? I don't want you to hurt him."

"I have no intentions to hurt Jack Will."

"We have to go now… before he wakes up."

"Jack is in the basement, unfortunately though Will it isn't as simple as just leaving, I have things in place yes, but it wasn't meant to play out like this, so I am going to need the rest of today to finalize everything ok?"

"But he will wake up soon and call people, then we have no chance."

"Will you just have to trust me ok? I will take care of everything, I have to go and stitch myself up and then I have to go out for a couple of hours, in the meantime I want you to pack everything that you would like to take with you, and anything else you need that we don't have, we will get for you."

"What about you? Why aren't you packing?"

“As I said Will, I already have things in place.”

“Where are you going? Please don’t leave me… you won’t come back.” Will went into another bout of instant panic, what if Hannibal leaves without him? What if the man just leaves him here to deal with the fallout? No, Hannibal wouldn’t do that… would he?

Squeezing Will a little tighter Hannibal pressed a kiss to Will’s temple, he understood the agent’s panic but he has no choice, the proverbial clock is ticking, though he has no intention of leaving Will behind, ever. “I have a few things to do to ensure that we have a clean break, but I would never just leave you, you just have to trust me ok?”

“I trust you.” Will did trust Hannibal, with everything and even though their clean break still feels like a lifetime away, right now there is a spark of hope, perhaps that is optimism, the anticipation of good things to come? It’s a feeling that Will hasn't had in so long that it almost feels as foreign as it is welcome, but scary all the same… this has to go right.

“Good, because I will always keep my word to you Will. There are some more of your things in the drawer I just opened, and there are two cases in the closet beside the master bedroom, you have my word that I will be back in a couple of hours at the most ok?”

“Ok.” Standing Hannibal pulled Will with him and pressed a soft kiss to the agent’s lips, in that kiss was the sweetness of passion, a million loving thoughts condensed into a moment and Will ached for its return as soon as Hannibal pulled back and left the room.

Will took a few moments to calm himself, hugging Tera before retrieving the cases and moved to pull open his own closet doors, using what Hannibal had taught him in the times of his distress Will turns his thoughts to the good aspects of the situation to dispel the bad ones, and the first thought is knowing that Jack isn’t dead. That is more than just a relief, it brings with it an actual slight rise in excitement because he doesn’t have to contend with that eternal guilt, the second thought falls to the passport, it signified that Hannibal had indeed thought this through and wanted him, so maybe they really did have a chance? A fresh start.

So rack by rack, pole by pole, Will folded each item of clothing and packed it away neatly before moving to the bathroom to do the same thing, collecting any and all needed toiletries and once packed Will moved to sit back on the bed, there is a slight sadness in looking in the case though because there were irreplaceable and sentimental items missing, they had been left behind at home but guesses he can let those things go, they can make new memories, new sentiments, but after moving to the deep drawer that Hannibal had kept locked up until now, it turned out he wouldn’t have to as there nestled inside were the things he was so saddened to leave behind.

The photographs from his childhood, small trinkets given as gifts by people he cared about, the first few lures that he had made, the ones that had him so enthralled with the activity… placing his most treasured items in the case it only solidifies his belief that yes, Hannibal truly did want him to go with him.

Walking back into the kitchen Hannibal almost smiled at the war zone that now lay before him, the representation of it stole his usual internal turmoil that would appear at the mess and instead replaces it with the thoughts of his and Will’s very near future together. Finding a

clean spot Hannibal sterilised his abdomen before moving to stitch it up, he had to give credit where it was due, Jack had been a fierce fighter. Wrapping up his wound the Doctor left to put the final touches on his plan, there had been one important aspect to this design that centred around Will's happiness, it was going to be difficult in the now very small time frame but he is determined to do what has to be done to ensure that last final detail comes to fruition.

Seeing the door at the end of the hallway open was still a strange concept to Will, his mind went back to Jack and he silently questions if the man would be awake yet? It had taken a while to pack and if so the man was probably terrified. To approach right now though and say sorry to Jack would be like covering a bullet hole with a band-aid, it really wouldn't change anything… these days the word sorry is so meaningless and overused and saying the word wouldn't fix what he has done, the fear and the pain he had caused, sorry is just a word, but still, Will knows that it is owed.

Will made his way downstairs, approaching and retreating from the basement door several times before finally finding the courage to pull it open, he let out a slow controlled breath as he attempted to loosen his body movements because currently Will was walking like a clockwork soldier and that was no way to be in this situation. When he and Hannibal run they are going to come after them both… but maybe if he could convince Jack that he is here of his own free will then the search for Hannibal as an abductor wouldn't be so aggressive?

So, he gave his shoulders a wiggle and lolled his head in a circle, let his stride slacken to a more casual pace as he descended down the stairs. It was a decent effort, enough to fool the casual observer, but for the onlooker with a keen professional eye like Jack's, he was a walking advert for tension. Will's eyes moved around the dim lit room with the alertness that comes from heavy stress and his hands remained clenched by subconscious demand, he can feel the fear in his chest waiting to take over and perhaps it only wants to protect him? But Will knows there isn't really any danger, because Hannibal wouldn't leave Jack in a position that he could impose that onto him.

Rightly so Will's eyes adjust to Jack sitting up against the wall, his hands restrained behind his back but the agent goes no further, instead he chooses to sit on the bottom step as he looks over at a still slightly dazed Jack. As the two men make brief eye contact the air is so brittle it could snap, and if it doesn't, Will might, neither man speaks, what is there to say? Platitudes won't cut it right now, but he has to say something.

"I'm sorry I hit you Jack."

"Have you been here all this time?" Will offered up a nod but no verbal answer, his gaze fell to his feet as his fingers tensed and released against his palm, maybe coming down here wasn't such a good idea? "So you did just abandon everything and run?" Again Will offered up a motion of the head, shaking not nodding this time though, but still gave no verbal response.

"You have to give me something here Will, you assaulted me, violently." When Jack saw the same distress rush Will's face as the day he contaminated the crime scene he inhaled deeply, calming himself before he gave an identical response as that day, he has to take charge and

change the direction this time, the first time had already bestowed so much guilt inside of him. “Did you leave because of my reaction to you contaminating the crime scene?”

“N-no.”

“Abigail!? Was it the guilt over killing her father? The promises you made her? Was it-”

“No! I-I didn’t leave because… I-”

“You what Will? Talk to me! You didn’t what!? You didn’t leave by choice did you?? Did you!?”

“Y-yes I did... but not for any of those reasons.” When Will moved to grasp his own hair Jack once again attempted to stem his temper, he knows that Hannibal took Will, he would have known that whether the agent slipped up in both his words and demeanor or not.

“I know you Will, and I know that you didn’t leave by your own choice, you have to let me help you ok?”

“I am here of my own free will, I-I asked Hannibal to keep it secret.”

“Will there is nothing in that statement that is convincing me, nothing, just tell me the truth and we can work this out.”

“I am here by choice.”

“Tell me the truth Will! Hannibal took you didn’t he??”

“No!”

“WILL!”

“N-no! He didn’t!!”

“Will I know that Hannibal took you ok? This wasn’t your fault, you have been here for so long now and people like Hannibal are exceptional at manipulation… you-”

“How long?” Will didn’t mean to ask, it confirms Jack’s theory but clearly the man knew the truth anyway, all that remains is damage control.

“How long what Will?”

“How long have I been missing?”

“Six months.”

“H-Hannibal helped me, yes he took me but that was at the beginning, now I’m here because I want to be… a-and we are leaving together, and I just want you all to leave us alone.”

“Will you are so confused right now, Hannibal has abducted you, manipulated you, this is abuse.”

“No he hasn’t!! He cares about me and he has helped me!”

“There is all the difference in the world between helping someone Will and exploiting that person’s hardship for your own gain, and that is exactly what Hannibal has done! The feelings you are having right now is Stockholm syndrome, you know it, and I know it.”

“N-no it isn’t Jack, he gave me a choice to leave right now… he kept the promises that he made me and he loves me. I won’t let you or anyone else take that away from me.”

“Hannibal doesn’t love anybody Will, he is incapable of that. An honest, decent man would feel bad for doing this to you, but he doesn’t, he loves it. It was a thrill for Hannibal to turn us all over and watch as we worried for you, he stood by my side as I searched for you any way I could all whilst I gushed about what a great guy he was. I was so wrong about Hannibal Will and I know that you don’t believe it right now, I didn’t either, I considered that man a friend, and a good one! But now I realize that I have misinterpreted his actions. Upon that realisation Will many others have come to light, his words, his actions, everything! Nobody was indispensable to him and everyone in his life fulfilled a purpose. In all the time he worked for me I never saw a genuine emotion other than what I now know was enjoyment… he claimed to remove himself from a situation emotionally to offer a professional opinion, but that isn’t the case. People were, and are simply pawns to him, including you Will, you are just blind to that right now… let me help you, and I promise that you will see Hannibal for exactly what he is in time.”

“N-no you’re wrong… he does love me! He does care about me!”

“He doesn’t care about you Will, he isn’t trying to help you… he is using you.”

“HE HELPED ME MORE THAN YOU! YOU PUSHED ME TO THE POINT OF ALMOST BREAKING! HANNIBAL SAVED ME! YOU USED ME!!!”

After making his first stop to the opticians Hannibal drove to Alana’s, checking his watch he knew her routine pretty well by now and knows there is no chance of her returning anytime soon, so pulling up the Doctor moves to the door and pops the lock, standing inside to maintain the appearance of being the homeowner and waited on the man he had enlisted… smiling when he arrived at five on the dot.

Once the man completed his request, Hannibal had a mere twenty minutes to make one last stop and get back home, he had promised Will that he would be no longer than two hours and the last thing he wants is for the agent to freak out if he’s late. Nothing in the house is locked and if he isn’t back by the agreed time then Will may assume he has been abandoned and make a rash decision, that would be detrimental to every aspect of the design, it would throw everything out of sync, so the rush is on.

Thankfully though the opticians had Will’s glasses ready by the time he had returned which leaves him ten minutes to make the five minute drive, there is still a nervous energy settled in Hannibal’s gut, although everything is in place, there are still a variety of ways this could go wrong… he wants there to be excitement, and there is he guesses. But for Hannibal the excitement has always been in the chase, the games, the build up to a design of his own hands

that he can sit back and watch, chasing Will had been the most exciting one so far, but the crescendo was always the same… death.

Hannibal has never left a victim of his twisted mind alive before now, whether it was by his physical hand or through his puppetry, nobody was left unscathed, with Will it had to be different and it was for one reason only, Hannibal loved him, real love, for perhaps the first time in his life. No matter what happens he would never hurt the agent… but this would be a relationship, and though he has occasionally maintained some short ones, Hannibal prefers the prospect of solidarity.

But everything with Will is just different…

"Will I understand why you are angry at me, you have every right to be. I shouldn't have pushed you so hard with those cases, I could see you struggling and I didn't do anything to stop it or help, I am truly, truly sorry. I hate myself for my reaction to your distress but I care about you Will, and I care about what happens to you, so does Abigail, Alana, Brian, Beverly… and everyone else, people are so worried for you, please just let me help you."

"I don't need any help Jack! I'm safe! And I am happy! Genuinely happy for the first time." When the brain develops a cold indifference to logic as its primary decision maker, bad choices are made, Jack can see those bad choices coming to fruition in the agent's words, but Will could not.

"You really don't sound too confident in that statement Will." Jack wants nothing more than to protect Will before it's too late, because if he runs with Hannibal he will no longer be seen as the victim, but rather an accomplice and that isn't right. Will is not the aggressor here, Hannibal is, there is nothing more than confusion that has been instilled with clever psychiatry and he needs the young agent to realize that before it is too late.

"Well I am." To judge a person, one would need to see all perspectives through the lens of the judgee, but Jack can't do that because he has no clue what happened over his time here, so his opinion on the situation only has Will digging in his heels, the man knows nothing about his relationship with Hannibal, and he never will.

"You have given so many lectures on people in the situation that you are currently in… you are suffering with Stockholm syndrome Will, you are merely a hostage that has developed a psychological bond with your captor… Hannibal is your captor Will, not your savior, and he is a very sick man."

"You are wrong Jack, very wrong!"

"If you really believe that Will then let's have an honest discussion about it! You always argued facts with me so maybe you need to hear some? Or are you scared that you may change your mind and see your situation for what it really is?"

"I'm not scared of anything anymore."

"Then talk to me Will!"

“Fine! If you want to talk about it lets talk!” That is the in Jack needs, he just needs to convince Will of what he already knows deep down, the confusion comes as a fog, it is when the brains pre-frontal cortex defocuses in an attempt to allow the dreaming brain through, pushing away the ultimate problem solving side… it’s a coping mechanism.

The human body can only feal terror for so long before it finds a way to cope, to deal with it, and victims of abduction feal nothing but terror so the response for long term captivity is Stockholm, yet what Jack needed was the opposite, he needs Will to break free from that fog and allow his higher brain to take control once more, to focus on the situation for what it really is and let a path forward away from Hannibal emerge, and what better way to argue with Will? Facts.

“Ok, throughout captivity, emotional bonds are formed between captors and captives during intimate time together, have you and Hannibal been spending intimate time together?”

“Intimate time together can mean an array of things Jack… my version of intimacy may differ greatly from yours.”

“Ok, give me some outlines then.” As soon as Jack asked for specifics he should have anticipated Will’s clammed up reactions, the agent had never really been any good at opening up personally so yes the silence was expected, but he only has a limited time to engage Will in conversation so changes tact instantly. “Ok fine, I will name a few stop me when I hit them… have you continued with your therapy whilst here?” A nod of the head. “Sex?” Another nod of the head but also severe blushing this time and Jack needn’t go any further.

“Why does that matter?”

“There are four key components that characterize Stockholm syndrome Will and you show them all, even after our current, albeit very short conversation. A hostage will develop positive feelings towards their captor, and you have, a hostage will refuse to cooperate with the police and other government authorities, which you are doing right now. A hostage’s belief will rise in the humanity of the captor because they cease to perceive them as a threat which leads the victim to hold the same values as the aggressor, which you have by attacking me, and finally there is no previous relationship between hostage and captor… yes you and Hannibal became friends before he took you, but we both know that isn’t the type of relationship characterised by the outlines don’t we?”

“Just because I have forgiven Hannibal it doesn’t mean that I fall into that category, yes there are similarities, but that isn’t what is happening here, and you have no idea what mine and Hannibal’s relationship was before I became a guest in his home.”

“Will if you leave with him then you will spend the rest of your life on the run, you can never come back from this as you will no longer be the victim. But you can recover, all you have to do is let me help you.” Will finds it quite ironic that recovering from Stockholm syndrome is basically subjecting himself to another Hannibal as recovery, ordinarily the journey to freedom from that connection involves psychiatric or psychological counselling in which the patient is helped to realize that their actions and feelings stemmed from inherent human survival techniques.

The process of recovery though includes reinstating normalcy into the lives of a victim, but that isn't possible for Will because his 'normalcy' almost killed him, and it brought nothing but unhappiness… so he doesn't want it back, he wants Hannibal who was now his normalcy, maybe he was before even coming here? The therapy also includes helping the victim learn how to decrease their survival driven behavior's, but it is those behavior's that Hannibal has spent the past six months instilling so he has that survival instinct, so how can taking it all away be a good thing? To Will it isn't.

"There is nothing more for us to discuss Jack, I love Hannibal, and he loves me. I am happy and we are leaving together, it doesn't matter how you or anybody else feels about it… and you can chase us but you won't find us."

Will didn't flinch, or even move to turn when he heard Hannibal descend down the basement stairs, just wiped away the tears and waited for Hannibal to take over the situation he couldn't deal with any longer, he knew Jack's perception of the situation was correct, well to him anyway…. it wasn't to Will though because only him and Hannibal that knew the truth, the real truth.

Standing directly behind Will Hannibal placed soft hands on each arm, offering up a small squeeze before pressing a chaste kiss to his temple as he spoke calmly beside his ear. "Go upstairs please Will, I won't be long." Will offered up a nod and wiped away the last remaining tears before moving to walk up the stairs, ignoring Jack's last comment the best he could.

"He is manipulating you Will." Upon slamming the basement door Will walked upstairs to lay down, yes everything Jack had said resonated with him, it was hard to hear because there was truth to what he said, but just not to him, Will knows this was his choice.

"I am going to need the code to your cell phone Jack."

"I am going to say the same thing to you as I said to Will, you don't love him, and he doesn't love you, and you know it. This is nothing more than Stockholm syndrome Hannibal and one day very soon, Will is going to realize that, and when he does you will rot in prison for the rest of your life."

"I am not here to debate my relationship with Will, that is between ourselves… just know that I will continue to take very good care of him from here on out. Now, I have asked you once, and I am only going to ask you nicely for the code to the cell phone one more time, as you can understand I will need to keep you here until myself and Will are safely away. But, when you do not show up for work your colleagues will be understandably worried and it is highly likely this will be one of the places they come as we were considered friends and they will assume I have knowledge of your whereabouts. So, I am going to need to send a text from yourself explaining that you are dealing with an unexpected family emergency and will be returning to work within a couple of days. Of course if you don't want me to give me the code I can always take a short cut and visit the people I need to contact… but then I will need to take certain measures to ensure they do not interfere, and I really don't think you want that on your conscience… Alana knows that you were paying a visit here correct? She after all was the one who contacted you about my visit to Abigail?"

“784567…”

“Thank you.” Tapping the code into the cell phone Hannibal typed in the text to Alana, Beverly, and Brian, simply explaining that Jack is dealing with family issues and he would return in no later than two days’ time, but he is not to be contacted until then. “You have no reason to worry Jack, before we leave I will release one cuff and leave you with plenty of food and water for the time you will be restrained, and once Will and I are safe, I shall make a call to divulge your whereabouts.”

“I thought we were friends Hannibal… how could I have been so wrong about you?”

“You know Jack humans evolved as a cooperative species, we survived because we learned how to conquer selfishness, but for people like you who never evolved past that point cannot be considered a friend to anyone. This is because you put yourself first in any and all situations, harming another doesn't heal you, it doesn’t make you a hero, or make you respected but rather makes the cesspit of humanity all the more putrid. You put yourself first in your treatment of Will, you almost broke him beyond repair all under the guise of catching a killer… so you could be that hero. Don't swim in such filth Jack, pull yourself out and stand on the side, learn to seek ways to put others first, the more you do that, the better our world becomes for everyone, yourself included, and only then can you form such bonds of friendship with another person.”

“FUCK YOU HANNIBAL!”

“I am sorry that you feel that way Jack.” Returning to the kitchen Hannibal grabbed a couple of bottles of water and a small amount of food before descending the stairs once again, smiling as he placed them close by to Jack. “If you know what is good for you then you will not put up a fight when I remove one cuff and secure you to the pipe, Will may not be a killer Jack, but I do not have the same reservations.” Jack took wise and didn’t fight when Hannibal rearranged his arms, ensuring the food and water was in reach, but the elder agent raged on the inside.

“I will make it my life’s mission to find you Hannibal, Will does not love you.”

“Then you will waste your life Jack, I can assure you of that fact. Now, myself and Will are leaving very shortly, we will be far away by the time I put the call in to divulge your whereabouts… I would like to say it has been nice knowing you but I will settle for it has been fun.” In his arrogant triumph, Hannibal smirked, just a small pouting of the lips, a narrowing of the eyes, and a tilting of the head.

The action was so subtle, subtle, but sickening to Jack, it was even more infuriating for him because the elder agent knows that this probably will be the last time he sees the Doctor, his chance for retribution dims with each step Hannibal takes upstairs and disappears completely when the basement door is slammed.

Walking to the top floor Hannibal is elated, everything has come together and the design is complete, and it’s only solidified by the small smile he receives upon walking into Will’s bedroom. The smile is aired with an understandable nervousness, but Hannibal knows its only for what’s to come, he decided against mentioning Will’s visit to Jack as quite frankly it

wasn't his business, he was surprised the agent had done it though, but guesses it was more about closure than anything else.

"Are we leaving now?"

"No, not this evening Will, we will be going first thing in the morning."

"B-but why not now? People will be looking for Jack and they could come here?" Will trusted Hannibal, but this seemed to be a stupid move on the man's part.

"I have already taken care of that Will, you have nothing to worry about. We need to think ahead, Jack currently thinks we have left, he knows that we will not use the Baltimore airport as fake passports or not, it wouldn't take them long to view all CCTV and find out which plane we used and where we went. So, if he assumes that we have left this evening then they will calculate the time and start matching up airports with that distance, so we do the opposite, we leave in the morning and they will be unable to locate the time and distance ok?"

"Ok…" Will had been correct in his assumption that yes Hannibal really had thought this out, but a plane? That causes one big issue for Will, especially if the journey will be international. "What about Tera? I don't want to leave her behind… but she can't just go on a plane? She needs documents… and a passport, and-"

"Tera has everything that she requires ok? I ensured that when I had to call out this afternoon, please stop worrying Will, everything will be ok, but it's getting late so how about we go and get some sleep?" Will looked slightly confused when the man held out his hand as opposed to the usual act of pulling back the sheet, but upon walking down the stairs he soon realized that Hannibal meant let's get some sleep in his bedroom.

But maybe Hannibal would be interested in something other than sleep? Will certainly was…

This is my design...

Chapter Summary

> Well I am quite saddened that this is the end of the story! I have really enjoyed writing it but it's time to move on to some different stories now…
>
> I just wanted to say a huge, huge thank you to everyone that has followed this story right to the end, especially as I had quite a long break from it when I got complete writers block, the support has being absolutely amazing… I have appreciated every comment, every kudo, and every bookmark…
>
> I really hope that the last chapter is enjoyed and doesn't disappoint anyone, so please let me know your thoughts and again thank you everyone…

From the moment Hannibal's bedroom door closed there was an explosion in Will's brain, the good sort, it was the type that carries more possibilities than he could be conscious of and in that buzz of electricity... he could physically feel it. Knowing what the next chapter held was the calling card of adventure, of paths awaiting his feet and truthfully Will couldn't be more excited, or more nervous. The agent knew whatever was ahead could be a great challenge, and there could be regrets. Hannibal was no saint and it does lead Will to silently question the obvious, would they ever be truly settled? Or would the Doctor's innate behavior lead to a constant slew of victims and police chase?

Will wasn't stupid, he wasn't naive or ignorant either, he knew what Hannibal was… but for some reason even in his empathetic reasonings he chose to ignore that side of the man, as though not thinking about it would resolve the problem and in a way it did, because the evil that dwells inside Hannibal didn't extinguish Will's love for him. So, the next adventure was theirs to take together and no matter what happens, he knows now that Hannibal would never hurt him… and he would never be alone ever again because the Doctor was his guiding arms that would never let go.

Hannibal only released Will's hand once he is pulled into the bedroom and the door is closed but before he can speak a word the agent's hands have already found him again, rising to Hannibal's shoulders, drawing him in closer with a tender pull to kiss the man's unresisting mouth, capturing his lips in a searing kiss.

A deep groan rumbled throughout Hannibal's chest as their tongues mingled and Will couldn't help but answer with his own, especially when the Doctor shifted, one hand curling around the nape of his neck whilst the other possessively grasped at the slender hip and with one sharp tug, he is pulled closer by the man to deepen the kiss. Will moaned again but the sound was drowned, eagerly swallowed as Hannibal pressed their hips closer together in an

artless grind… nothing more is said, and Will went willingly as Hannibal walked them backwards until they fell down on the bed together with a satisfying thump.

Hannibal wastes no time in finding the hem of Will's shirt to push it off in one swift movement before doing the same with his pants, taking a moment to devour the sight of the agent's bare skin as his lips soon pressed to the crook of his neck, and Will's searching hands descended lower, pulling open each button of the smart dress shirt until it is pushed from the man's body.

Hannibal feels breathless, devoured by the actions as Will's hands grasp his hair, pulling him closer to deepen the kiss without hesitation and the Doctor takes full advantage, his hands trailing every inch of the soft skin, touching as much of the agent's body as he can whilst pulling him impossibly closer until they ground against each other with need. Oxygen became an issue all too fast and Hannibal finally breaks away, pressing their foreheads together he stilled, inhaling deeply as he cherished the moment of Will in his arms, laid out beneath him so wrecked already.

Easing back Hannibal presses his lips to Will's neck and relishes in the soft whine uttered, it spurs him to kiss lower, leaving breathless kisses against the agent's skin, lips slipping over his jaw, his neck, his collarbone, anywhere he can reach as he sank lower. When Hannibal's searching mouth pressed against his abdomen Will keens, arching into the press of lips and tongue, knowing exactly where the man is about to reach.

Hannibal looks positively sinful as he glances up at Will and without missing a beat uses his tongue to guide the agent's already throbbing length into his mouth and the sound Will makes is absolutely obscene, his head rolls back against the pillows and the movement only seems to encourage Hannibal to take more of him into his mouth. With another loud whine Will's urgent fingers caught in the Doctor's hair, the grasp tightening as the man takes more of him into his mouth and the reaction is instant, groaning the agent rolled his hips forward, bucking with each gentle rock of his hips until he is buried deep in the tight heat of Hannibal's throat.

Hearing Will's moans fall to whines of need above him is enamouring, the agent is seemingly in a losing battle with himself not to fuck into his mouth, a battle that Hannibal is doing his best to make him lose by taking in as much of Will as he can, and still trying to swallow more, hollowing his cheeks to suck harder and lick around the entire length of his cock.

Will's desperation only grows when Hannibal moves his head faster, licking every inch of him with a slight groan and it has the agent bucking his hips forward faster, using more force with each thrust until he was fucking into Hannibal's welcoming mouth, clawing at the Doctor's hair as he does. Hannibal makes no move to pull away though, instead he applies more pressure with his massaging tongue as searching hands slip down slowly, grasping at Will's hips to pull the agent further down his throat, nails digging deeper into the soft flesh.

As Hannibal becomes a little rougher with him Will loses all resolve and moans louder, the movement of his hips becoming erratic and fast, eager to get himself off he arches his back again, crying out loudly as Hannibal's name spills from his lips as the man moves his head faster, groaning as he does.

“H-Hannibal close!” It really didn’t take long to get Will off like this and with one more suck he cries out as he spills into Hannibal’s mouth, the grip of his fingers in the man’s hair nearly vicious and it’s as though the Doctor feels Will’s need pouring through him, and he wants it all, hungry for it, swallowing his seed, sucking relentlessly to draw out any remaining pleasure until the sound Will makes is a whimper, and his fingers begin to tug at Hannibal’s hair with overstimulation, prompting him to draw back but not pull away.

It’s in that moment, that moment of slowly kissing back up Will’s panting body that Hannibal knows he doesn’t want to be anywhere else other than here… and here is always going to be with Will. Once again the agent’s arms wrap tight around his shoulders, pulling him back into another passionate kiss as sparks of electricity pulses over the now feverish skin and Hannibal obliges, kissing back with need before trailing lips to Will’s neck… groaning when the agent tilts back his head, allowing him better access.

“Hannibal…” Will breaths out and for a moment Hannibal can only still, rooted in place by the sharp aching pleasure at hearing Will moan his name, the awareness of him so clear as he pulls back to look in the agent’s lust blown eyes.

Hannibal caresses Will’s hip as an equally soft hand clasps his cheek and for a moment there is a stillness on both sides, though the eye contact that didn’t seem so difficult for the agent to hold this time. As though getting his bearings, Hannibal couldn’t look away from the long lashes, framing Will’s disarming eyes, he is looking at the agent with the same frank affection he usually does and it only ends when he exerts a pull on him, any air of nervousness has seized as Hannibal is pulled back against Will, touching every inch with a hunger to feel all, to take what there is of Will that can only be known in the boundaries of skin and the ache of physical desire.

When their gazes met this time, it was like a spark of voltage, physical and heavy and neither could look away… there is nothing outside of this, there is only this moment, only the two of them and the pulsing beat beneath their ribs. Will’s hands travel to Hannibal’s pants, being the only one completely exposed seems to feel unfair, so, with searching hands, he finds the hem of the man’s pants.

Turning slightly and with a display of confidence Will shifts upward and straddles Hannibal’s hips and doesn't look away when he starts undoing the Doctor's belt, and then the button and zipper on his pants to aid the man in shedding them, and looks extremely exquisite doing so. Will tried to remain still as Hannibal’s attention went to his own length, slicking it with lube before nestling the thick head against Will’s hole and moved his hands back to the agent’s hips, ensuring he had a controlling grasp of the now slightly trembling form.

“Slowly Will.” Sinking down with the aid of Hannibal’s grasp of his hips Will gasped loudly as the tip of the Doctor’s length slowly breached him, it’s gentle and insistent work as Hannibal eases him down onto the rock hard length in shallow, but steady penetrations. Bracing his hands against Hannibal’s chest Will gasps as another inch slowly breached him and with a gentle push, the Doctor used guiding hands to lower Will down further, caressing his hips with his thumbs in a distracting effort.

Hannibal started things off at a slow pace, using his own body and grasp to help Will rise and fall as he gently worked his throbbing length in and out of the tight heat of the agent, but

when the final, merciless drop of Will's hips comes, Hannibal's cock plunges all the way inside in one swift movement and the sound that's punched out of the agent's throat is damn near animalistic. The entire length is buried inside Will to the hilt, immediately bottoming out the agent instinctively clenches around the wide length and groans as he sees instant sparks of white.

The sight of Will towering above him, using his chest as leverage while he grinds at the pace he wants, has Hannibal fighting to hold back the overwhelming need to thrust up into him with reckless abandon. Will tried to relax, his head falling back as he panted slightly, the small shocks of pain ebbed almost instantly and gave way to small sparks of white hot pleasure that he felt the first time he was fully impaled on the Doctor's rock hard length and he felt full, really full.

Will sat there for a moment longer, taking some time to breathe and adjust before Hannibal's hands grasping his hips were moving him up an inch, and then sinking him back down just as slow. Will's fingers closed around the man's shoulders as he continued the rhythm of slowly rising and falling on the length, groaning loudly with each slight drop of his hips.

Hannibal kept his grasp tight as Will began to drop down a little harder, and after a few slow thrusts, he seemed confident enough to pick up the speed slightly. Hannibal helped to move the agent slowly, they worked together as the man thrust up gently with each drop of the agent's hips, slowly moving in and out to gently stretch Will's tight walls open, and only when he is sure the agent is relaxed enough Hannibal pulls him down harder onto his throbbing length, pressing dead against Will's prostate and he watches intensely as his eyes roll at the sensation.

"Oh! Hmmmm." Hannibal continued with guiding hands until Will tilted his hips slightly, beginning to experiment himself as he pushed down onto the length inside of him, and let out a longer moan this time when it hit that sensitive spot inside him once again.

When Will found the perfect position his hips began to drop down with a little more speed, and when he angled his hips once more the pain disappears completely and the pleasure of each shock rises, melting into a sudden nerve-static pressure and for a moment it feels so good that he can't think straight, when Will begins to relax the length lodged so deeply inside of him begins to slide with a little more ease and it begins to feel good quickly.

Will aimed for that same spot with every drop of his hips, slamming generously into the knot of his prostate he spreads his legs a little wider, and bucks down harder onto Hannibal and the moans that begin to leave his lips turn obscene, keening, and bestial. With every thrust upwards Hannibal encouraged him to drop down even faster, the agent arches and moans as the Doctor's throbbing length presses so precisely and exquisitely into his prostate, and Will can't help but drop down harder, ensuring every inch is buried deep inside of him, deeper and deeper until he's twitching all over, nerves sending unstoppable jolts throughout every part of him as his hole strokes the Doctor's huge length.

Hannibal groaned as he looked up at Will, admiring his lust blown look and beautiful thrusts, listening to each and every moan that left the agent's mouth as he bounced faster in time with his every upward thrust and groaned louder when Will reached the point of chasing his own

pleasure, letting out a much louder slew of moans as his hips worked desperately to fuck himself down onto him with need.

“HHHMMM! Oh! Harder… Hannibal!!” Will’s hips bucked faster as he dropped down harder, whimpering as he teased himself, pushing Hannibal’s length all the way inside of himself, letting it press deeper inside each time before bucking his hips in short movements, small circular motions sending calculated attacks to his prostate and almost screamed when Hannibal began to relentlessly thrust up hard into to him.

“Ah! Ah! Ah! Nng!” Will moaned louder as he worked his hips impossibly faster and Hannibal listened as each cry from the agent became needier, his mind was completely locked on watching Will get himself off, the intoxicating friction against his own aching member has him groaning in unison as the agent’s hips bucked like crazy.

Will began to shake and Hannibal could see the way each movement of his hips has him arching and trembling as he shuddered out in ragged breaths, drawing himself closer his entire body shook with excursion when he started moving at a brutal pace, dropping himself down faster, harder, screaming behind closed lips, as a sheen of sweat now littered every inch of his skin and Hannibal could almost feel Will's stomach fluttering with need.

Both of their body's moved together in unison, each breathless gasp synchronized, the sweltering room beginning to spin as all the blood rushed rapidly to Will's core when he met each of Hannibal’s thrust upwards eagerly, bearing down on the length inside of him he moved his hips even faster.

Will’s hips rise up and drop down with a desperate need to meet each penetrating thrust, it was unlike anything that he had ever experienced, even better than their first time when Hannibal seemed to hold back slightly, treating him as though he were a glass that would break but right now there was nothing but raw passion.

Will’s mind and body had etched beyond all caring when all he could feel was a blinding pleasured sensation… he was lost to it. Oh god, the heat, the feeling of Hannibal hitting his prostate each time, he had never known pleasure like it before in his life, a slew of moans emanated from his lips mixing with the wet sounds that filled the room and Hannibal listens to him, revelling in the noises Will is making as he began to grind down faster, seeking release.

“Please! HHMMMM!!” Will didn’t know what he was pleading for, but he needed more… his back arched as Hannibal’s grasp on his hips tightened, helping the agent to bounce even faster, the feeling is intense, it drives a constant slew of moans from Will’s throat as his legs begin to shake and tremble, but Hannibal just thrusts up faster, pressing in deeper with each drop.

Will couldn’t hold back any longer, he was getting so close and he can’t stop himself, he could feel his orgasm building in the pit of his stomach and began rocking his hips even faster, all resolve gone as Will drops down harder, groaning from the depths of his chest.

“AH! Ohhh!

“Faster Will, that’s it.” Will moaned louder as he used all of his hip and thigh muscles to bounce even faster, when his vision started to cloud from strain and pleasure.

“Hannibal close!”

“Not yet Will.” Hannibal could feel the orgasm sweeping through him as the agent bounced even faster and as he came closer to his release he braced a hand under Will’s arm and thrust up even faster. “Cum for me Will.” With one more thrust and drop of his hips Will arched and cums on command as Hannibal releases deep inside of him and his orgasm increases tenfold when the agent lets out a wail of ecstasy as each body shook with the force of their orgasm.

Hannibal sat up instantly, slowly stroking Will through it as he collapsed against him, and the agent’s body twitched with overstimulation, his mind is totally lost in the quintessence of pleasure and is glad the Doctor kept his supporting grasp, allowing him to catch his breath before lifting him slightly to dislodge himself from deep inside him. Upon the slight hiss and wince of the action Hannibal pressed a kiss to the young agent’s temple before offering up one more squeeze of his embrace and aided laying down an exhausted Will.

When a good lover loves you, good things happen, you rise in all ways and believe in yourself more… and that’s how Will feels in that moment… he has begun to thrive in ways he never realised were possible. With the right person you become more, a better version of yourself just like he had, and that's how he can be so sure that he and Hannibal are right for one another.

“I love you Hannibal…”

“I love you too Will.” Rolling Will on his side Hannibal curls himself around the curve of his body, listening as the agent’s breath calm and sink into a peaceful rhythm… even after everything they had just done Will’s purity remains, it’s the last thought in the man’s mind as each subconscious self hands over the reins of the night, each head has become foggy and it's as if every eye lash weighs more than it should and gravity has been turned up tenfold as they check out and slide into instant REM.

For a change Will didn’t wake with a start, there wasn’t even the usual amount of sweat and upon waking, instead he was nothing but dry and comfortable. Shifting slightly he burrowed himself into the warm, soft sheets as he rubbed the last remainders of sleep from his eyes and gazed out the window at the horizon, its vivid light extended across a rosy sky and he instantly sees the beauty in the view… and the new adventure it holds.

Shifting again Will could still feel Hannibal curled around him and he feels nothing but a hug of protection that brings a lazy smile to his face, especially when Hannibal snored lightly, clearly still in the grasp of a comfortable sleep. As Will lay cocooned in warmth he gazes out of the window and his mind ventures to the previous evening with Hannibal, and also the night’s dream, everything was so clear and vivid. Any dream or nightmare had always been dissected in detail during Will’s morning routine and last nights was no different, interpretation can take on many forms but this one seemed abundantly clear, he had been trapped in a dark room, scared and alone in a confusing realm as though searching for help, and he found it… that help was seemingly Hannibal, it was a reoccurring one and the only part of the dream that never scared him.

Today Will feels relatively calm, but it's under the surface and mixed with some anxiety and he's not used to the combination, it's truly odd. Calmness takes him up, and the nervousness of what today will bring takes him back down, so in that mix he's simply focused on the moment. Some days he needs Hannibal to keep him on an even keel, he reaches out and accepts his helping hand, but today he doesn't feel that desperate need for it... he feels stronger. Perhaps it's like that for everyone starting something new? Pleasure at gaining forward momentum and the fear of change, but for Will that change will be an equal playing field, no confinement, no forced therapy… just a new start.

It wasn't long before Will felt the unmistakeable shift of Hannibal rousing and the agent smiles wider as the man's embrace of him tightens without hesitation. "Good morning Will." The pieces of Hannibal that had always struggled to fit into this world seemed to settle when he lay with Will, it was as though they had finally found peace… and it is that feeling the Doctor never wants to let go of.

"Good morning." Shifting in Hannibal's arms Will turned to face the man, smiling at his sleep mused face and the only word to describe it was cute, but it only became cuter when Hannibal offered up a small huffed out laugh as his hand scrunched into the tumble of his hair.

"What are you laughing at?" Will briefly turned his head into the pillow as he shed himself of any remaining sleep, and looked back at Hannibal who seemed to be enamored by the sight of his tousled curls that defied the rules and gravity in that moment.

"Nothing, I am just admiring you." Hannibal teased as Will ran a hand through his hair trying to tame the mess he knew it was.

"Yes I'm sure you are…" Reaching over to the nightstand Hannibal picked up Will's glasses, and moved to gently place them on his face, taking the opportunity to press a gentle kiss to his lips.

"Well, as much as I would love to spend an eternity with you like this Will, I think that we should make a move ok? We are on a tight schedule today." Pressing another kiss to Will's lips, Hannibal reluctantly shifted from the agent's grasping arms and moved from the bed, he really could have spent an eternity in that moment but they needed to leave very soon if they were to stay on schedule.

"Ok…" Will watches as Hannibal stands and revels in the softness of the sheets for a few moments longer, he never expected to reach this point with the man, and on some level it still feels as though he would wake from this bizarre dream… not that he wanted to.

Will questions how it would have turned out if he never forgave Hannibal for his abduction, it would have been so different… but it's important with a new love that effort has been made to fully heal first, to do the inner work that is required to become a whole person and Will knows that he has. Otherwise it can never be a true connection because he would still hold resentment to the 'crimes' that came before, and he didn't want to live that way with Hannibal, he wanted a clean slate that can only be achieved by seeing the man as he truly is, no filter, no expectations, only acceptance… and the agent accepts everything.

“I’m going to take a shower ok, why don’t you do the same and then place Tera in her crate?”

“I will…” Hannibal couldn’t help but press one more self-indulgent kiss to Will’s lips before moving to the en-suite to shower, and the agent really did consider pulling the man back into bed for round two and if the schedule wasn’t so tight, then nothing would have stopped him. Hannibal was right though, the longer they stay in this house the more chance there is of being caught, so, Will did the same and returned to the top floor to wash up and grab Tera.

It only takes a mere thirty minutes for each man to prepare, and after placing Will’s case in the car, and Tera’s crate on the back seat, both men take one last look at the house… Will’s gaze lingers for a few moments longer than Hannibal’s as his eyes travel to the top floor window, the one he tried so hard to break from only months ago… but now is the time to build new memories, create the good times and forgive the worst, for their future is together.

That's the way it is when you love someone, it has to be, this is how we gain a new perspective on what happened, it is important to move on and recall the happy times instead, and Will had many good times to reflect on in that house, focusing on them is how he deals with the bad ones... he can disarm them that way, and choose real happiness for himself.

“Are you ready Will?”

“Yes…” Hannibal moved to open the car door for Will and took one last look at the house himself before pulling out of the driveway.

There was a comfortable silence between the two for nearly an hour as they travelled down the dirt roads as opposed to the main, the new dawn sky hanging around them like a blanket of peace although the day was a cold one, the two inside were warm with the heater blaring but still, Will’s entire body seemed to offer up the slightest of trembles when he leaned back in his seat. For what reason? The agent isn’t all that sure, it could be a variety of things so promptly put it down to nerves.

“Are you cold Will?”

“No I’m ok.”

“Are you sure? You seem to be shaking slightly.” Hannibal isn’t naive to the possible situations that could arise, but not with the escape.

Regret is there to invite us to view past events through different perspectives than the ones we had at the time, in the action of the moment. It is this creative perspective that eventually allows for a different assessment, and Hannibal does worry that will happen one day with Will… he prays that it doesn’t and yes he has his own regrets, but he intends to make up for every single one by treating the agent better than anyone else in this world could.

“I’m ok, I’m just a little nervous.”

“That is understandable Will, I would be more concerned if you weren’t.”

“When are you going to call somebody about Jack?”

“As soon as we land I promise, he has plenty of food and water so he will be fine, please try not to worry about him Will.” There was a belief in that statement, because if Hannibal didn’t call he would.

Will shed himself of the thought for now though as he enjoyed the rapidly passing view and barely noticed when hours seemed to melt away to seconds with idle chat with Hannibal, their conversations were always like that, deep in strange ways and comforting. But it was when they had been on the road for nearly eleven hours laughing and talking about anything that came to mind that Will was beginning to feel restless in the small space, and he isn’t even the one driving. Hannibal had insisted he was fine to continue, innocently oblivious to Will’s discomfort, well, until another hour passes and the Doctor finally admitted that he was also a little tired and probably wasn’t in any condition to keep driving.

“Maybe we should stay somewhere for the night? What time is our flight?”

“In seven hour’s time, and the airport is only an hour away now.”

“Well then we have a choice of waiting in the airport for six hours on uncomfortable chairs, or staying somewhere… I think staying in the airport could be risky though.”

“Yes I agree.” Hannibal knew that Will was right, any extended stay in an airport could be risky, there is more chance of being noticed on the CCTV so staying somewhere until check in was probably a wise idea.

Looking around their current destination though it seemed to be an extremely run down place and the Doctor guesses any room available would be filthy, he wasn’t wrong when he saw that eerie light of a motel sign getting closer as he took the exit and even that was etched with grime. They were practically in the middle of nowhere though so it appeared to be the only option, it turned out to be a travel stop area which was popular to both truck drivers, tired people, and creeps alike… it somewhat resembled a horror movie set.

“Maybe we should just keep driving Will?”

“I know it doesn’t look great Hannibal, but let’s be honest there probably isn’t going to be anyone scarier than you staying here.” Will tried to lighten the mood even as the dread and panic really started to settle in himself when they pulled into the parking lot of the all around creepy place.

“Why do I get the feeling that you are in a mocking mood today Will?”

“I don’t know? Maybe you know me too well? Or maybe you are just an easy target.” Rolling his eyes Hannibal stepped out of the car and Will did the same, grabbing Tera’s crate from the backseat and took Hannibal’s hand when offered as the two walked into the grungy reception to be instantly greeted with a sinister looking man.

As Hannibal approaches the desk Will holds back, there is just something in the way the man looks at him, like he's doing so much more than just taking in his form like others do, his face looks like a mask, all his features just seem… controlled. His bloodshot eyes twitch

uncomfortably and under his unbrushed, jet black hair, the man speaks with a creepy grin, his tone a brazen yet intimidating one and it's almost enough for the agent to turn and run.

"How can I help you sir…"

"We need a room please."

"Ahhhh… you are very lucky I have one more left… it's the only room available for miles." There is nothing creepier to Will than a person with emotions that don't match the situation, the man spoke in a pleasant tone with a demented grin, his mere presence seems to drain anyone's calm feeling, seemingly absorbing it for his own selfish self so Will was grateful when Hannibal paid quickly and they were able to get the hell out of this man's presence. Even walking far away from the man Will is left with a creepy feeling, but it soon subsided and was replaced with a feeling of amusement when they found their door.

Will couldn't help but snort out a laugh at Hannibal's reaction to their motel room, it was small and cramped, dirty and smelly too and the man looked about three seconds from turning and leaving. They had checked in under the guise of one name so that meant they were a couple in the eyes of the motel's creepy looking manager, it also meant there was just one bed which wasn't a problem, but the state of it was.

"I think we need to find another place to stay Will." That was all it took to draw out the loud laugh Will had stemmed, he knows Hannibal's aversion to dirt and grime so this room was probably near hell to him, to the agent yes it was bad, but he had certainly stayed in worse places, and as they were only going to be here for around six hours he didn't see the issue.

"You heard what the guy said, it's the last room available for miles, by the time we find somewhere that fits your standards Hannibal we will be due back at the airport, so, I am afraid for the first time in your life you will have to slum it."

"I am fairly sure 'slumming it' here will lead to us catching something Will."

"You really have no chill when it comes to dirt do you?"

"I think that should be a standard that everybody lives by." Rolling his eyes Will dropped his carryon bag to the ground and placed Tera's case beside it before opening it, allowing her to roam the disgusting room. Reaching into his own carry on bag Hannibal pulled out a couple of towels and spread them over the stained comforter and the action only has Will laughing harder as he lays down on one of them, stretching out to relax his tensed up limbs.

Hannibal sits but seems to refuse to lay until Will pulls him down beside him. "Come on Hannibal, I won't bite." Will said and laughed, and Hannibal wasn't entirely sure if that was just a bad joke, or a cannibal one, but either way with a groan he laid beside the agent.

It's fine, he can burn this suit, it isn't his favorite anyway… and touching Will is worth it.

Will scooted closer and snuggled into Hannibal's side, wrapping an arm tightly around the man, and used his chest for a pillow, as though without the grip the neat freak Doctor would just spring back up and jump far from the bed. Finally relaxing slightly Will realised how

close they were to their new start, in a mere few hours they would be on a plane far away from here and away from the people that wanted to tear them apart, the thought is comforting.

Will questioned the destination more than once but Hannibal had insisted on keeping it quiet… he didn't care though, because there seemed to be a sweet element to it, not a deceiving one. It's all the more comforting being laid with Hannibal so he doesn't care where they end up as long as they were together, he wanted the man, craved all of him… Will loved Hannibal, why else would he agree to run off with him and become a fugitive along with him?

Will sighed, he was doing way too much thinking, if he continued to dissect the situation then that would only bring the anxiety… when all he wanted to do was feel, he just wanted to feel Hannibal's arms around him and listen to the man's comforting words.

"Are you sure about this Will? Yes, it means everything that you came with me, but I want you to be absolutely certain about this because it isn't too late to turn back." Will nodded into the man's chest and before he could stop himself, he was pressing his lips to Hannibal's.

"I came because I wanted to… I want to be with you, I love you Hannibal." Gently rolling Will onto his back it didn't take long for Hannibal to indulge them into what they both wanted… the need to be with Will completely bypassing his need to be off and away from this disgusting bed.

Arriving at the airports check in thirty minutes before their flight Hannibal approached first and explained to the lady behind the counter that the trip was a surprise so requested she not divulge the destination when checking them both in, she seemed to find the notion extremely sweet and handled the situation perfectly. Hannibal isn't really sure why he wants to keep the destination a surprise, but it wouldn't be the only surprise that awaits Will. Being first class they were boarded immediately after checking in themselves and Tera, although Will felt sick at the prospect of handing over the pup, even after being assured multiple times that she would be perfectly safe.

Flying was probably Will's least favorite thing to do in the world, he hated flying, he hated planes, he hated being stuck in a pressurized cabin thousands of feet in the air with numerous people. There wasn't really any specific reason, more a mixture of everything, his autism didn't respond well to the tight space, if anything went wrong there was nothing he could do about it… at least when he is in a car, if something went wrong he could have some effect on fixing it, but if a plane went down, there was nothing he could do about it other than be at the mercy of the pilot and fate.

So knowing that he was going to be stuck on a plane for ten hours… ten long hours sent his anxiety into overdrive, he's trapped with nowhere to go, no escape if things go wrong but still he is walking down the aisle until they found their seats. Will silently panicked when Hannibal offered up the window seat to which he declined and it was in that moment the man picked up on some of the distress that the agent seemed to be displaying. Hannibal waited until they sat before he turned to him though, he wants Will to know that if he is having regrets, it isn't too late for him to turn around.

“Are you ok?” Will offered up a rapid nod, biting his lower lip as each hand moved to grasp the armrests tight.

“Y-yes I’m fine.”

“Will if you are having second thoughts it isn’t too late to turn around.”

“No of course I’m not having second thoughts… I-I’m just not all that good when it comes to flying, but I will be fine.” Hannibal pulled a sympathetic smile and gently grasped the agent’s hand, he can certainly venture a few guesses as to why the agent doesn’t like air travel but decides against dissecting them and instead tries to take Will’s mind away from that fear with pointless conversation as everyone else filed in, finding their seats and stowing their luggage.

“Yes…” Will said, but to what he didn’t know, he could barely hear Hannibal over the roar of his fear instead he was still trying to keep his breathing even, every time the Doctor spoke he nodded two or three times, then cringed at how ridiculous he must look right now and gazed at the seat in front of him.

“Just breathe Will.” Hannibal squeezed the agent’s hand a little tighter, encouraging him to meet his pattern but Will was having a hard time thinking straight. The plane engines were beginning to rev up with the loudest of rumbles and the captain seemed to be speaking nothing but gibberish over the intercoms as the flight attendants began the safety speeches and Will tried desperately to ignore it all, choosing to close his eyes and take a slow breath in with an equally slow exhale.

When Hannibal saw the impending signs of hyperventilation he interlocked their fingers and squeezed slightly, trying in vain to distract Will’s mind, the agent was so focused on breathing in and out like Hannibal had told him to but the instant the plane began to move Will grit his teeth when it felt as though his throat would close up.

Will braced himself, willing the plane to reach its altitude so he could settle at least remotely. Every vibration of the plane, every bump and shudder, kept freaking him out to the point he almost vomited and when the plane tipped and began to lift off the ground Will gripped the armrest and Hannibal’s hand like they were the only things that would ground him, keep him safe.

When a lifetime passed the plane finally levelled off and the intercoms once again dinged with the sound of the captain’s calming voice, apologizing for the turbulent take off but still Will barely listened, only catching something about how long the flight would be and weather conditions, and estimated time of arrival but he missed that part about destination when Hannibal clasped both hands over his ears as though he were a child near a raunchy conversation.

That action finally had Will choking out a laugh mirrored by Hannibal’s own, the laughter has him taking another breath to calm his heart. “So you really don’t want me to know where we are going do you?” Will asked, smiling as the flight attendant came by to offer them drinks.

“Wine thank you.”

"Same for me, please." Will said politely, and quickly realized this would be his first drink in over six months, but further relished in the fact that he didn't feel the need for Hannibal's approval, clearly those days were long gone and it felt as though they were finally on an equal level with one another, especially as the attendant gave them both their drinks and moved on.

Will sipped it slowly, not wanting the drink to go straight to his head and chuckled when he looked over at Hannibal pulling out a book. "I don't know how you can focus on a plane."

"It helps to be comfortable with flying." Hannibal shot him a smile that Will knows wanted to be a grin, yes a fear of flying may be irrational, but at least the man isn't overly mocking him.

"We all have our fears Hannibal, at least mine are rational… unlike a certain someone's aversion to a little mess."

"My fear can lead to illness Will."

"And mine can lead to death what's your point?"

"Is this going to be ten hours of you mocking me?"

"Maybe... depends how many glasses of this cheap wine I consume, if I get drunk enough we could even become members of the mile high club." Picking up the book Hannibal practically put it straight back down knowing there was a very slim chance of concentration sitting beside Will, especially when he was in a seemingly playful mood now the fear had surpassed.

"There would only be one problem with that Will."

"And what's that?"

"Your inability to remain quiet during coitus."

"Coitus? Really Hannibal? Can you say anything like a normal human being?"

"Yes I was correct, it's ten hours of mocking me."

For at least part of the flight Hannibal was immersed in his book and during that time, Will attempted to sleep, and it almost worked… he would nod off for maybe ten minutes but when the plane would bump or shudder he would jolt right back awake. Eventually he did manage to get some real sleep, and when he woke up, he found that he had slumped over and was resting his head on Hannibal's shoulder.

"How much longer until we land?" Just as Will asked the question he felt the unmistakeable movement of the plane beginning to descend and in seconds his anxiety spiked once more. It was in that moment the intercom buzzed to life and everyone was once again told to turn off their electronic devices and put their tray tables and seatbacks up.

As the plane began to descend further Will's breathing became shorter as the panic started to rise, but he told himself over and over that finally the flight was nearly over, however that didn't stop his hand once again clenching the armrest and Hannibal's hands as he started to tense up.

"Not much longer now Will." Will nodded and took another few slow breath's which did nothing to stem the panic, however, the feeling of Hannibal's hand on his was comforting, if only because it provided a distraction.

As the plane descended further Will could feel his ears pop and his stomach jump until finally he felt the unmistakeable shudder of the wheels hitting the ground and instantly the panic dissipated and paved the way for nothing but excitement. Finally the anxiety of things that could go wrong were far behind them, looking out of the window Will could tell instantly they were somewhere warm and as the plane continued its approach to the building, signs came into view and he recognized the language written on them regardless of the fact that he couldn't speak it… how did he not guess their final destination?

"Italy?"

"Florence to be precise, but yes."

"I really can't believe that wasn't my first guess…"

"Happy?"

"Very… aside from the fact that I have to learn a new language."

"Good, lets go as we still have a little drive and hopefully we can take in some of the scenery before it gets dark." Walking into the airport and through customs Will was quite surprised by the size, it was extremely small and not too busy which made for a quick exit and an excited Tera when she was released back into his care, hearing Hannibal speak the language fluently almost had Will melting, he couldn't help the small smile that appeared with every person the man had to speak to, it truly was a beautiful language… especially on the Doctor's lips.

Climbing into the rental car Will rest his head against Hannibal's shoulder as they began to pass some of the most beautiful houses and scenery that he had ever seen. "What are you thinking about?" Hannibal's voice broke through his thoughts, and Will shook himself back to reality.

"Nothing much…" Will smiled. "Just went down a rabbit hole."

Hannibal nodded. "Did you catch us anything nice down there?" Hannibal asked with a smile, shifting to grasp Will's hand with his own.

"Only animal's… I don't think they are to your taste though." The laugh Will uttered at his own joke was an auditory hug for Hannibal, in all the time he had known the agent he had never heard him laugh like that, the sound rolled around the car and it was as though there was an invisible feather brushing at the nape of Will's neck, brushing softly.

It was easily the most at peace Will had been in his entire life, and he more than anyone had more than earned a fairy tale ending, riding off into the sunset with the love of his life, and he seemingly has that ending. Will smiled again and rest his head softly against Hannibal's shoulder as the car continued down the quiet road, that only seemed to get quieter, turning from a pedestrian to a country lane and the scenery only became more beautiful, but not as beautiful as the home they eventually pulled up to.

The mansion stood there as if the surrounding nature had embraced it, that the flora flowed within it as much as around it. For the architect had loved the trees so much that there was a mighty oak in the centre, centuries old, and the great house had been built around it. Standing in front of it Will's mouth almost gaped, the only thing drawing his attention from the scene laid out in front of him was the slight pull the man offered up, turning the agent to press a chaste kiss to his lips.

"Do you like it?"

"It's big…" Hannibal huffed out a small laugh as he hugged Will a little tighter, he really could get lost in Will's eyes, deep and warm, with a fond expression that softens his whole face, the kiss was respectable, but it was also sweet and short, they pulled apart but Hannibal kept his hold of the agent's hand as the pair and Tera made the short walk up the dirt driveway.

Will gazed at the old the old building properly when they etched closer and it truly was one of the most beautiful homes he had ever seen… the front lawn extended so far back from the house complete with an array of different flowers that framed the stone path, and Will could feel the love and care oozing from every carved stone wall of the house. Sculptured angels hung high up on the walls that seemed to rise to the crystal blue sky, and it just added to the peaceful atmosphere.

Once at the foot of the stairs the elegant windows of the old house came into view they were slightly oversized and divided into many parts like the compound eyes of a fly. The mansion had a way of belonging to the earth it graced, of grays and browns were its walls of, the kind of stone that reflects sunlight into the ambient soul. The home had long since loved the land, for its stone carried the memory of its creation long ago and the trees that danced in the wind there was a sense of belonging.

The exterior was certainly to Hannibal's exquisite taste and Will assumes the inside will be no different, but upon walking inside it's as though every aspect of the home had been constructed with the pairs individual tastes combined, there was an elegance coupled with the homely feel that Will was so accustomed to and he realizes that yes… this is a home for both.

The couch in the family room is a deep red scattered with fine green silk pillows, embroidered so delicately that they must have taken hundreds of hours to sew. The drapes are constructed of the same earthly green, the kind that is untouched by hands and devoid of dust and a cursory look to the right shows Will the almost hidden cords that are used to open and close them. The couch faces a large, beautiful fireplace with a rug laid out in front and a small dog bed for Tera placed so lovingly in the centre of it.

Walking further in two large bookshelves are fixed to the back wall each crammed with book after book, with a decent sized wooden table sitting a few feet away, the floor is a high polished wood, dark and free of either dust or scuffs… and if anything, the color scheme matches Will's own. As he took in more details it really had been constructed with him in mind, and Hannibal's taste had clearly taken a back seat and there is something deeply calming about it, he doesn't even think it is the homely comfort either, it's the companion he will share his days with here.

"Do you like it?" Will didn't turn to face the man, if he had then Hannibal would have gotten his answer from his expression alone, instead his eyes continued to roam the space and yes, he did like it… he loved it.

"Yes…" Hannibal smiled and walked to stand directly behind Will, wrapping loose arms around the agent in a soft hug from behind as he spoke close to his ear.

"I have one more surprise for you…" Keeping one arm around Will's waist the other gently clasped over the agent's eyes as he walked them through the large kitchen into the back garden, but Hannibal stilled before opening the back door, keeping Will's eyes covered he pressed a kiss to the crook of his neck and smiled.

"All I ever want is your happiness Will." Pushing open the back door Hannibal guided them outside and finally pulled back his hand… and Will's chest hitches hard at the sight, tears beginning an immediate steady stream down his face as he took another step forward, falling to his knees to greet Winston and every other one of his dogs he thought were gone from his care forever.

Before Will can draw in the air his body needs, he has melted into each animal's excited form, he can feel each fluffy paw and the hearts that beat within, the agent let the happiness soak right into his bones and closed his eyes to savor the moment. Hannibal really had questioned at the time if breaking into Alana's home to steal the dogs had been the right thing to do, they had been with the woman for over six months and questioned the separation… but after seeing them reunite with their true owner he knows the decision made was the right one.

Standing and walking back to Hannibal the tears of joy didn't abate, they only grew in happiness when the man's hands are folded around his back, drawing him in closer. Will can feel his body shake as though letting go of any remaining tension, Hannibal pulls his head back and wipes the tears away with a soft finger, and for a moment he is eating the agent with his eyes, running his hand through the tousled locks, as if he can't quite believe Will is not part of an almost forgotten dream.

When they kiss it's sweet and gentle, it tastes of Will's joyous tears, the agent wants to speak but all he can do is croak out the words… "I love you Hannibal."

"I love you more Will." Hannibal's mouth paints a soft smile before folding Will into his arms once again.

In Hannibal's embrace, with his dogs in this home… their home, Will smiled, thinking of nothing but all the new memories they would make here, because finally, he's home…

THE END

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